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Between Dawn and Sunrise

SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF

James Branch Cabell

CHOSEN WITH AN INTRODUCTION

& INITIATORY NOTES BY

JOHN MACY

New York

ROBERT M. McBRIDE & COMPANY

1930

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FOR

Virginia Randolph Ellett

WITH THE AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION

ALIKE OF THE EDITOR AND THE EDITED

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INTRODUCTION

Some writers are immediately recognized and are long remembered or soon forgotten. Others wait many years, it may be until after they are dead, before they win a place in the Temple of Fame. The most fortunate of all authors are those who, in their lifetime, create a taste for themselves, educate a certain number of readers to understand and like them and to look forward eagerly to their next books. This biographical division of writers is no way, or at best it is only a rough way, to estimate their merits. But it is a way to classify their careers and to approach a consideration of their qualities. A towering example of the artist who gradually teaches his public is that of George Meredith, for whom Mr. Cabell avows a lack of admiration. Mr. Cabell himself is another conspicuous example of the artist who has not gone out of his way to seek an audience, certainly not an audience already assembled and known to be relied upon for applause. He has kept to his own course, which is as private and solitary as any man who circulates his words in print can pretend to follow. Finally, after twenty years he has the modestly triumphant satisfaction of seeing an audience collect, a little by a little, come to him, stay and ask in advance for seats at the next entertainment. That is a most fortunate career, the most pleasant that an artist can desiderate, no matter what disappointments, rebuffs, irritations, he may have encountered in the pursuit of his lonely individual path.

From his commencement as author to the secure and enviable position which he now holds with the completion of the somewhat monumental Storisende edition of his works, Cabell has run the gantlet between foes and friends. On one side may be figured a rank of hostile and ignorant reviewers thwacking him with blows intended to kill. On the other side a row of champions cheer at top voice, administer to Cabell only the thumps that are pats on the

back, and over the victim's head strike at his adversaries. From this ordeal Mr. Cabell, who has walked rather than run to the only exit, emerges with his head unbowed and not severely bloodied. If the image of the gantlet seem grotesque, undignified in a sober estimate of him, the absurdity is, nevertheless, appropriate and is sanctioned by his own treatment of it. For he has recorded, in his prefatory Author's Notes and elsewhere, his experiences at the hands of ruffians and simpletons posing as critics, and has set it all down with an air of whimsical and amused disdain. Moreover, he has kept an account of his dealings in the market-place and has given us the reports as accurately as did Anthony Trollope—though his adventures were not, viewed practically, so fortunate as Trollope's. Still more to the point, he has been his own best critic and commentator and has enclosed the Biography of Dom Manuel and his descendants in two firm brackets of criticism, Beyond Life *at the left and* Straws and Prayer-Books *at the right. These terminal books are much more than egotistic talk about the author's work; they are not a critical theory erected after the fact, to support the fact; they are a complete, objectified, critical credo (however first-personal and subjective* credo *must be), and they touch with precise discrimination writers as far apart in time and talent as Marlowe and Joseph Hergesheimer. They are eminently re-readable books; and I, who have recently re-read all of Cabell, find such delight in this alpha and that omega of the complete works that in case of some unthinkable fire and in case I owned the only copies of the whole set I should dash to rescue the first and the final volumes. From them rather than from any other two volumes I could reconstruct from memory the Biography which they enclose.*

The Biography enclosed in the Prologue and the Epilogue, in Beyond Life *and* Straws and Prayer-Books *is that of Dom Manuel and his tribe, not chronologically of the man Cabell who in this year or that wrote this book or that. His editorial arrangement of his twenty volumes or "chapters" according to their subject-matter rather than by the dates of composition is perfectly logical; just as the historical plays of Shakespeare are printed in the numerical order of the kings and not in the determined or conjectured sequence of events in the life of the author. The final disposition of the volumes—itself an act of composition—is facilitated by the singular homo-*

geneity of Cabell's work. Many authors, those who have not tried to do too many kinds of things, have a prevailing point of view, a temperamental rather than a wilful unity in the choice of subject, and in manner or style of expressing themselves. It makes little difference which novel of Dickens or Thackeray, which poem of Tennyson, Browning, or Swinburne we read first, or consider first in retrospect. The novels and poems are, for each writer, all of a piece, all "monotonous," but, as Cabell somewhere explicitly bids us remember, in the derivative, not the derogatory sense of monotonous. There is in Cabell's work, both in manner and matter (if the two things are really separable) an evenness and continuity of texture, and the continuity should be emphasized; for he gives, chapter for chapter, volume by volume, a sense of flow and progress and development. His case is not like that of Emerson, most of whose essays could be moved from one volume to another without making any reader, interested in Emerson's essential thought, feel that there had been an illogical displacement. In reading Cabell one feels a sustained and progressive activity, and this quality is one with the fact that he is by nature, by purpose, a narrator, a tale-teller. Notice how often in the presentation of more or less abstract critical or philosophical ideas he prefers to throw them into dialogue or monologue, put behind them a fictitious spokesman and so give them a kind of dramatic movement, in which the sense of living talk is maintained and the erratic rambling of talk is restrained as in a play, a novel, or a Socratic dialogue.

The homogeneity of Cabell, the unbreakable unity, I proved, as probably no other reader has had occasion to prove, when I came to make an anthology, a book of selections from his work. I found that I could easily dive into the stream anywhere and fetch up a pearl, but that I could not—to muddle this image hopelessly—cut the stream up into sections and by some feat of editorial hydraulics take out an exact yard or mile of it or even a portion indicated by pretty definite shore-marks of sense. It was that difficulty and not diving for treasures that nearly brought me to a beatific death by drowning. I said in my mind to putative readers of the book of selections, which threatened to burst through the levee-covers of a single volume: "Oh, begin anywhere and read on! Make your own anthology, if you can. It is easy to make a collection of short poems

from the poets of five centuries. But you cannot treat epics or vast dramas that way and you cannot do it with twenty volumes of organized, constructed, closely articulated prose. I know that there are millions of volumes of selections from prose writers, usually edited for suckling or nibbling students, equipped with introductions and notes which are mostly superfluous and occupy space that might be better occupied by more selections, and . . . Well, this fictitious man Cabell does not lend himself easily to dissections, vivisections, amputations, editorial beginnings, artificial lacunae indicated by rows of periods placed interruptingly by somebody else."

So my own experience taught me to accept, without Mr. Cabell's argument as his own editor, the unity of the Biography. And Beyond Life *is the place to begin. Only, I think his determination of first and last and intermediate developments does not, from the point of view of logical sequence, destroy the order fixed by inexorable facts.* Beyond Life *was written in 1917-18, just after* The Cream of the Jest *and just before* Jurgen, *that is, at about the middle of the composition of the total Biography. It looks, then, both backward and forward, and architecture is not disrupted if we regard it not only as the portico to the structure but as the very central pillar of it. Here is the heart of Cabell's beliefs about the value and purpose of art. Which came first, his theories or his practice, matters as little as the sequence of the chicken and the egg. Yet in 1918 he was mature enough to have thought through and formulated general ideas of life and literature, which at an earlier time, even when he was in sure command of his method as a novelist, may have been groping, instinctive, not so consciously coherent. The leading principle, announced at once by the dogmatic and amusingly evasive* alter ego, *Charteris, is that "books are best insured against oblivion through practise of the auctorial virtues of distinction and clarity, of beauty and symmetry, of tenderness and truth and urbanity." Though Mr. Cabell surely never intended to apply these words directly to his own work, they are just the words which I should have chosen, if I had thought of them, to define his merits. I am not sure of truth, for I do not know what it means, and neither, avowedly, does he; and some readers may question his tenderness. But exactly fitting to include his excellence*

are the other words: distinction, clarity, beauty, symmetry, urbanity. Especially urbanity, civilization, the right kind of "sophistication" —a word now so slick and flappered and greenwichvillaged that we had better put it in storage for a generation to preserve what is left of it. The filtered clarity of Cabell's prose is the more remarkable because he so often plays with intangible and elusive ideas, and the ways of his elusion are many.

Charteris continues with the notion that the artist is a demiurge, a creator of new worlds, lovely and inhabitable because they are unlike the world which our bodies inhabit. This idea may be no new definition of romance, of a universe of illusion, where dreams do not come, but are, true; Kipling snare-drummed it in "The Three-Decker"—"taking tired people to the Islands of the Blessed." Charteris-Cabell unfolds it, or enfolds it, in a multitude of allusions and illustrations, setting the real world of unreality against the unreal world of "realism." The world of imagination is the only conceivably true world; it has an actual effect on our conduct in this diurnal intolerable life, and in it we are remade as the children of our own make-believe. "Man alone of animals plays the ape to his dreams." And man pays the price of his dreams. In the section called "The Economist" Charteris develops the quite novel idea that the artist gives his life in return for a certain reward and is the most intelligent, the only intelligent buyer and seller. The word economist as here used is unknown in any university course in economics and would probably be outcast from any university course in literature. The artist barters, trades, pawns, wastes his worldly goods, even his physical health and "moral" integrity in a gamble, in exchange for the chance of creating something that may perpetuate his dreams or at least partially satisfy him as long as he lives. This is a bigger and bolder idea than the fragile theme of "Dream Pedlary" by Beddoes (invidiously called a minor poet): "If there were dreams to sell, what would you buy?"; for that dream poem glides with impotent grace into a Victorian cottage. The idea emerges magnificently in the extreme examples of mad and outrageous poets, Marlowe, Villon, who stake and squander everything that practical people value, in order to secure for themselves and for us, all subject to the accidents of time, the immortality which is in them. I do not know whether

I echo Charteris or add to his argument or disagree with him, if I point out that the Paris, the actual Paris which Villon insolently immortalized, really immortalized him, and that some of the great poets, Shakespeare (so far as we know anything about him), Jonson, Milton, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, had no abnormal economic difficulty in this practical world, were not lacking in common-sense, and got along as comfortably as any banker, archbishop or other respectable person. But it is true that, though a poet may win in both worlds, it is in the other world that he most wishes to win, where he is willing to be, must be, "the reputed wastrel who played the usurer with his loaned body." And Charteris concludes: "It is this will [the will to have things better than they are in our unsatisfactory, unfinished world] that stirs in us to have the creatures of earth and the affairs of earth, not as they are, but 'as they ought to be,' which we call romance. But when we note how visibly it sways all life we perceive that we are talking about God."

The idea of the economist, the man who shrewdly gets what he wants in real value, in the true coin of the other realm and not in the false metal that passes over commercial counters, becomes a favorite metaphor with Cabell in the novels, and you find again and again in chapter headings a perverted use of a word metallically sacred to overpaid bankers and not underpaid professors: "Economics of Math"; "Economics of Horvendile"; "Economics of Yaotl";—Economics of Coth, Saraïde, Ninzian, Sidvrar, Jurgen, Redemption, Common-Sense. Shades of Adam Smith, Mill, Marx, Jevons! Living presence of Taussig, Maynard Keynes, Herbert Hoover, tariff thieves, the London Conference, and other sane and sober individuals and groups of thinkers! What does this man Cabell mean? Quite simple is the answer for all cases in the fiction and critical theory of Cabell and in the visible and invisible universe: What do you get from it and what do you pay, whether you are making stars or making love or making conquests or making money, or verses, or shoestrings? The answer for the artist, and specifically for the real man Cabell and the imaginary and imaginative person whose typewriter he clicks upon in clattering gaiety and somber base sonorities, as if it were a piano, is that he plays to please himself. This answer is fully expressed in the right-hand

bracket of his fairly long sequence of words, or the back door of his edifice, Straws and Prayer-Books.

In this Epilogue and valedictory Cabell plays with the idea that art is play, that the artist labors primarily, even solely, to divert himself, and is, if he happens to be a novelist, "life's half-frightened playboy." His compelling ambition is "to write perfectly of beautiful happenings." In the act of composition, which he calls his work, he is engaged in a game of solitaire, with words for cards, and the three principal tricks or objects of the game, at least as Cabell plays it, are various turnings of the themes, common-sense, piety, and death. Or rather they are the opponents against whom the solitary artist contends, knowing that he can never win, that the game cannot come to an end, until he is too feeble to play any longer and is vanquished by time and death. Fame and "success" and a possible immortality, or a more or less brief survival after death, are no great matters. Accident, chance, makes an irrational mess of posthumous reputations and of reputations coeval with the physical life of the author. His effort to give some quality of permanence to his work, to make it art and not journalism, has no exact relation to whatever degree of permanence it may achieve; the effort is what has most amused him, and he secures a reward, captures a prize every day of his writing life, for he has rescued himself during some hours of the day and night from being bored. He has fashioned a world for which he does not have to wait until he has passed to some egregiously separate star where no one shall work for money and no one shall work for fame. He cares not at all for things as they are or for the manifestly bungling God of things as they are. He is his own god, his own demiurge. This solipsistic conception of the artist is not at all incompatible with permitting, even inviting, for a fee collected by the publishers, other boys to look in on the game and take part in it—somewhat as Tom Sawyer whitewashed the fence, though in that historic case the original artist retired from art and became a publisher or producing manager.

Mr. Cabell does not suggest (unless I have overlooked a passage) that the reader is a playboy, too, that if he is a sympathetic reader of the book open before him, he puts himself in the author's place and is for the moment a sort of vicarious creator or at least a free

until he caught on, as they say in Poictesme. Only one profound critic and anthologist succeeded in finding the originals of Townsend-Cabell's translations from old French poets. Cabell can ghost-write a dream-poet or a doubly obscure scholar, in French if necessary, or medieval English; and he is not guilty of hoaxing, for he waves signals to the wary. Better still, he can make an alleged poet, a character in his drama, really poetic. The great poets, who work wholly in verse, Shakespeare and Browning, can maintain this illusion, but it is rare in prose fiction, where often we find characters whose poetic charm and wit the author asserts but who offer no verbal evidence of their gifts. Cabell is primarily a poet in his total conception and in his phrasing, when the immediate idea calls for poetic words, images, rhythms. And when prose is demanded, in some jibe in the voice of real life, often deliberately anachronistic, as when Coth says, "Bosh," or Gonfal says, "Bunkhum" and "Hokhum," the effect is that of an Elizabethan comic scene in the midst of high-stepping blank verse. Poets have no trouble in managing prose, but prosateurs, *even good ones, are sometimes poetically bankrupt. The poet sails forth on adventurous seas in a pinnace with gossamer wings and a cargo of gold, dream gold; his poetic equipment is light as the breath of the wind, but for ballast down deep in the hold are stout bales labelled prose in the shipment.*

Cabell has as much scholarship as a poet needs, derived from a wide wandering among all kinds of books. Unless the reader has a profound knowledge of comparative religion and mythology he will never be sure which of the queer-looking proper names are traditional and which are taken from unknown and dubious sources, such as those that seem to come to us from the Celtic by way of the Persian and the Kulangese. In a vague and general way Cabell's chosen literary ancestors are the medieval romances in French and English, and more especially his favorite Lothogambrian cycle. The color, tone and perfume of those full-flavored old wonder-tales are everywhere evident in Cabell's quite modern twentieth-century prose. Take, for example, this characteristically Cabellian passage: "And thus it passed on from Candlemas until after Easter, that the month of May was come, when every lusty heart begins to blossom, and to bring forth fruit; for like as herbs and trees bring forth fruit and flourish in May, in likewise every lusty heart that is

in any manner a lover, springs and flourishes in lusty deeds. For it gives unto all lovers courage, that lusty month of May, in something to constrain him to some manner of thing more in that month than in any other month, for diverse causes. For then all herbs and trees renew a man and woman, and in likewise lovers call again to their mind old gentleness and old service, and many kind deeds that were forgotten by negligence." Who that has an ear inside his head can fail to feel that in this bit of lyric prose lives again the spirit of ancient romance renovated to our modern taste? The passage is not from Cabell but from the twenty-fifth chapter of the eighteenth book of Malory's Le Morte d'Arthur *just as it was written more than four hundred years ago, except that the spelling is modernized and the "eth" endings of the verbs are changed to "s."*

In one respect the Cabellian romance differs from most other news-from-nowhere. Reports from fairyland usually have it that "they lived happily ever after." The heroes and heroines of Cabell's wonder-world arrive at no such blissful obliterating conclusion. They too suffer frustration, and in the realm of dreams their dreams are often vanity; their bubbles burst inside the greater iridescent bubble which they inhabit. Dom Manuel the Redeemer, the founder of the line, sets out in Figures of Earth, *burdened and inspired with his geas, his bounden duty, and his reiterated egotistic boast: "I am Manuel: I follow after my own thinking and my own desire." He passes to Limbo without ever succeeding in his effort to model the figure of a man according to his desire. A more naïve chronicler would have made a more "happy ending." Cabell in the very act of creating myth criticizes the way myths are made, and with his inquisitive, curious, latter-day mind he takes you into the alchemist's workshop and shows you how the trick is done; once or twice he comes perilously near to destroying the illusion with his temperamental disillusionment. The poet in him forever saves him. Yet his whimsical perverse way of turning on himself and shaking his puppet creatures may be the reason why his particular region of dreams has not been more popularly sought as a refuge from this trying and tiresome earth; why his books are not yet quite certainly on the shelf with the tale of Tristram and Iseult and* Alice-in-Wonderland. *They hold such a neighboring place on my private shelf, and, it is good to know, on an increasing number of shelves*

owned by readers who are fortunate enough to combine a childish credulity, such as romance demands, and an adult critical wisdom.

The end of Dom Manuel is no more felicitous than that which is chanted in Swinburne's universal burden: "This is the end of every man's desire." Manuel has risen from the mire to eminence and glory and has become so accustomed to getting what he wants that success no longer interests him; he has exchanged his youth for a prize that was hardly worth the having and has proved just one thing, the truth of his motto, "The world likes to be deceived." In spite of all his apparent progress and triumph Manuel quits where he began, still puzzling over the clay figure of a man, which he has fashioned over and over, never to his satisfaction; and so "the circuit is complete." The words are Cabell's own not too definite suggestion of his idea of a beginning and an end. None of Cabell's stories, except one or two short units, moves toward a victorious climax, through sustained suspense to a grand finale. With no interest whatever in the transparent trick of sequel writers, he is forever looking beyond the last page; and his richest episodes are whatever may be encountered along the circuitous way, circuitous and sometimes apparently aimless, as is the true way of adventure. The heart of the personal life of Manuel is the recovered and re-created wife of his youth, limping, swarthy and unbeautiful but dearer than all high queens and mistresses of sorcery. Manuel's contest with Misery, "who subtly evened matters up by awarding an aged man the woman for whose sake a lad had fearlessly served Misery," is a pretty allegory, but it is not like most conventional allegory, thin, lifeless and transparent as the cast shell of a cicada. For though Cabell in theory and practice abhors "vitality," real red blood, and heroes taken from actual life or manufactured in Hollywood, he does make women bewitching, kisses delectable, heartaches bitter, and virile valor overwhelming.

The reader whose disbelief is not willingly suspended must have an especially stubborn kind of incredulity and had better ride his balky horse hurriedly backward out of Poictesme toward the stable of Mr. Gradgrind or, by a swift conversion of vehicles, to the stabulum asinorum *of a society for the suppression of literary indelicacies. Such a retreating reader will be followed only by the laughter which sparkles in Poictesme. For Cabell has introduced a*

light not usually found in necromantic literature. Romances and fairy tales are as a rule lacking in humor, and there are few specimens of what Gonfal calls "buoyant epics." There is not a spark of merriment in Malory; his attempt to make Sir Dinadan a court humorist is a dismal failure, which made Mark Twain sadly serious. This is not to say that the medieval legends and contes *have not droll episodes, but the tales of love and adventure are usually maintained on a noble level of solemnity. Though Cabell is too skilful and too poetic to shatter his own illusions, he fools with his knights and ladies and injects matrimonial modernities into their amorous and domestic affairs; for example, the husbandly and wifely commonplaces of Niafer and Manuel. It is little short of Swiftian satire to create the kingdom of Philistia with Stultitia as queen. This humor is one charm that holds the discerning reader long enough to see (while the uncomprehending reader is backing out of Poictesme on a balky piebald horse)—to see Count Manuel disappear through the troubling window, return a changed man, and finally ride away on a black horse, followed by Grandfather Death on a white horse, and so vanish beyond the sunset.*

Dom Manuel dies, but he lives as a myth in The Silver Stallion, *which is one of the latest of the novels in time of composition and publication but is properly the second narrative part of the Biography. It is the story of a myth within a myth, of how the legend of Dom Manuel the Redeemer grew and out of its very vagueness became solidified and accepted, and the Hero's tomb was a shrine for the faithful. The active tradition is carried on in the adventures of the surviving nine champions of the Fellowship of the Silver Stallion, who knew Dom Manuel during the lifetime of the lucky and unscrupulous rogue. In this Comedy of Redemption all the full Cabellian notes are sounded, and the scenes range from the deep well, where Kerin finds the fatuity of all recorded knowledge, to the high pagan heaven where Donander makes new stars for toys. Cabell, who loves all mythology, treats it all with a mild derision, yet at the same time with a riotously poetic imagination. The cosmic vision of the section called "Above Paradise" is one of the moments in which Cabell's genius is at its splendid best; whoever cannot enjoy such writing must have been born stone tone-deaf and blind to beauty. The conversation between Ninzian and the*

Prince of Darkness makes fine dramatic sport of the problem of good and evil which has vexed poets and philosophers and made chattering idiots of theologians. As the aging members of the Fellowship of the Silver Stallion come to their several ends, there finally emerges or crystallizes the "benevolent" legend of Manuel the Redeemer and the "wholly satisfactory" faith in his second coming. The entire fable or parable of how myths arise is a matter for chuckling wonder. "All ends perplexedly." And the sweet venom of the argument, so far as there is one, seems to be that the cult owes its origin ultimately to the babbling testimony of the child, Jurgen. All ends, but the end is not yet, for Manuel leaves progeny, through whom, as the wise Queen Alianora says, Manuel will come back a thousand times, and "whatever else may befall those persons who have Manuel's proclivities and life in them will be but another happening in the Biography of Manuel."

The daughters of Dom Manuel, Melicent and Ettarre, with their lovers, Perion and Madoc, carry on, in Domnei, *and* The Music from Behind the Moon, *respectively, the dominant motive of a great body of medieval romance, Chivalry. In no modern inventions can one find the spirit of the Age of Chivalry more profoundly understood and more delicately re-embodied than in these books and the succeeding volume of tales,* Chivalry. *The understanding, I say, is profound, and the treatment lovely; here is retained and reproduced the essential poetry of a chivalric love which was a religious cult, a code, a fine idealization of sex, celebrated by poets of all sorts from nameless troubadours to the supreme Dante. In the Middle Ages, when men were guilty of brutalities almost inconceivable to us who have witnessed only the gracious amenities of the World War, there was a hot and tender heart, at once youthful and mellow, and courts of love were conducted as solemnly and were, for literature certainly, as important as courts civil and ecclesiastic. The service of God, love and honor, and the quest of perfect beauty are all one pursuit, one with the quenchless longing in the heart of man for unattainable happiness, for everlasting youth, for immortality on earth and in heaven. This real intimation of immortality, the quest of youth, is the theme of* Jurgen, *which by an almost inconceivable perversion and stupidity some readers once thought irreverent and in violation of the laws of beauty.*

The only blasphemy which can be properly attributed to Jurgen *is that the quest fails and after a dream journey through timeless earthly and heavenly spaces ends deliberately in a prosaic vanity. But this is only like the failure of a knight who should seek vainly for the Holy Grail and come back empty-handed with nothing but his dream; and we may be sure that no such philosophic consideration occurred to the unphilosophic, unpoetic, improper persons who misread* Jurgen, *rode roughshod through this insubstantial substance and attacked it with the inept pens of blundering realism and the irrelevant sword of modern law. It happens that the law was finally just in this case and retreated, and that the little penmen were utterly lost in lights and shadows to which their eyes were unaccustomed. That is all we need to know of the legal adventures of the book* Jurgen. *It will be long, we can confidently prophesy, before the real adventures of Jurgen come to an end, to the only awful end which can kill a dream, oblivion in the minds of imaginative readers. Who goes with Jurgen upon his journeyings must himself wear a magic garment and be able to say, "The shirt of Nessus is upon me." If an adventitious celebrity was to attach to any part of the Biography, it is as well that by a blundering accident this extrinsic title to eminence fell upon* Jurgen; *for the book is so beautiful that a reader invited and willing, like Jurgen, to taste any drink once, will be tempted to take deeper draughts from this source and adjacent sources of loveliness.* Jurgen *is central in the development of the epopee, and each member of the triadic theme, Poetry, Chivalry, Gallantry, is here. The chivalric lingers, but it is fading past maturity and is soon to disappear, somewhat as the Middle Ages blend into the Renaissance. The poetic attitude is fundamental, for the prosaic middle-aged pawnbroker is restored during his miraculous wander-year to the poetic youth that he used to be, and the author, as usual, provides abundant poetry. The dominant attitude is that of gallantry, in which the tall seriousness of chivalry is smilingly softened to a playful and play-acting style of love, and the passion of woman-worship, guarded by pious devotion and a fanatical stickling for honor, gives way to pure pleasure. Jurgen's sense of justice, in this Comedy of Justice, is measured by no ideal standard but only by selfish considerations of his own comfort and amusement. He replaces the*

violet coverlet over the breast of Helen and explores no further only because he wishes to cherish his capacity for desire and not lose it by the killing satisfaction of one unsurpassable ecstasy.

The gallant attitude is thus seen to be at bottom sentimental; it is no longer the adoration of an ideal outside the lover, but the love of love, a kind of inversion, repeatedly stimulated by this and that momentary toy of a woman and having no loyalty except to the lover's complacent contemplation of himself. True tragedy has no place in gallantry, no sorrow more profound than the weariness of disillusion and the sadness of satiety. I am aware that these condensed critical abstractions convey no notion of the color and poetry, the verve and sparkle, the ingenious adventures and misadventures in heaven and on earth of Cabell's many inventions. But how can one convey all that without quoting and summarizing most of the book and so spoiling the integrity of the original? I can only assert that all these parallel or interwoven thoughtful meanings underlie an extraordinary variety of beautiful manifestations, that they are the basic texture of a unified design in which all sorts of queer, quaint, brilliant and shadowy figures disport themselves in endlessly entertaining postures and predicaments. I do not say that Jurgen *is the best of all the narratives; for in my affections it jostles for first place—if there be such a place—against* Figures of Earth, The Silver Stallion, The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck. *But I confess I find it difficult to tear myself away from this brief look, after many longer looks, at* Jurgen *and to pass on to a parting hint of the joys that await us in the volumes that follow.*

The Line of Love, *the second of four volumes of short stories (the other three are* Chivalry, Gallantry *and* The Certain Hour), *is regarded by Mr. Cabell as a sort of microcosm of the macrocosmic Biography. So, since one dare not disagree with the author, we may consider this book as central. Each of the stories represents in its way one of the three attitudes, and the stories run through ten generations of the tribe of Manuelites. More important than that formal placing of them is the fact that they and the other collections of* contes *include several excellent, well-nigh perfect specimens of the art of the short story. In the twentieth century, thanks to the not wholly despicable magazines, the short story has been pub-*

lished in greater quantity than any other form of current composition known to the human typewriter, and from this incalculable mass of fiction (of which nobody can pretend to get more than a slight glimpse) Cabell's briefer tales shine, with a few worthy neighbors, like gems in a coal heap. He began as a writer for the magazines, as do so many young writers, and oddly enough he received at first a fair amount of encouragement. It is as well that he did not receive more encouragement, for he might have become a merchant. Even so, he would always have been a jewel merchant with rare and fine gems to sell. Fortunately, circumstances abetted his larger talent and will to write longer books, or, as he would say, one long book.

The High Place *expresses more pointedly, perhaps, than any other of the volumes, the Cabellian conception of the measureless chasm between the eternal universe of dreams and the world of diurnal, "epigeal" actuality. Jurgen passes from one to the other, but he is too good an economist to confound them and he does not stay very long in heaven. Florian tries to make everlasting beauty and holiness live under the domestic roof and he learns what could be learned elsewhere, that it is disastrous to bring Galatea to life and to reduce Helen of Troy to an insipid German Gretchen. The hell that rewards such a confusing attempt at transformation is the hell of disenchantment. Eve in her loveliest form and costume simply will not walk up the path to the front door of a Virginia gentleman. To see her and learn "something about Eve" Musgrave must leave a Sylan double to undo him in his library and himself go backward in time to find her. He fails like most poets to get all the way to yesteryear (Antan). It is the perpetual and unadjustable discrepancy between the more or less tangible here-and-now and the intangible yonder-and-then. Even a poet cannot always reach Antan, for he is more than a poet, in other ways he is a man, and these ways keep him safe this side of Antan, even though he have the enchanted steed Kalki under his saddle. Yet his travelling is golden, and his frustration is not complete and not bitter.*

The discrepancy between now and other times entails also an incongruity between places and surroundings. The Musgrave of Something About Eve *at least returns to his incessant pen-scratching with plenty of ideas to play with. His kinsman, the other Mus-*

grave of The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck, *has no ideas at all worth speaking about; and the one that he has and of which he is only obscurely conscious, to maintain an obsolete chivalrous attitude in a modern Virginia town, is fatuous, yet touching and dignified. This Comedy of Limitations is Cabell's nearest approach to a social commentary on contemporaneous life, or, more exactly, on the contest between what is contemporaneous and what belongs to* autres temps, autres mœurs. *The assistant commentator is our old eloquent and garrulous friend Charteris, who here meets a violent death and so brings to an end Cabell's most delightful spokesman. The joyous fooling of this book, which has withal an appropriate gravity, is unflaggingly amusing. Colonel Musgrave with his dutiful rectitude and admirable gestures is a finely individualized person, however "typical" he may be.* The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck, The Cords of Vanity, *and the earlier story,* The Eagle's Shadow, *stand a little apart from Cabell's necromantic novels. Their fine qualities, the restrained irony and the freedom from conventional novelistic devices, make one wish for more of the same kind. And only Cabell could do them. Much of our fiction, even when it is sincere, honest and thoughtful, is streaked with vulgarity and verbal ineptitude. There are a few civilized American writers of fiction. But I know of no other who has Cabell's grace, delicacy and adroitness.*

The Cream of the Jest *is, fittingly, the top of the Cabellian structure (make what you can of that fluid architecture). Or, as one of Mr. Cabell's nominal substitutes puts it, the circuit of Manuel's life is completed and returns to its starting point in Poictesme.* The Cream of the Jest *is a dream of the witch-woman and is called a Comedy of Evasion. Another sub-title might be a Comedy of Self-Deception. What difference does it make that the talismanic sigil of Scoteia, by which Kennaston evokes the vision of Ettarre, proves to be only the metal cover of a cold cream jar? Kennaston has his vision, his poetic fantasy, however it is educed. Harrowby, the assumptive narrator, begins and ends the book by reflecting "that it is only by preserving faith in human dreams that we may, after all, perhaps some day make them come true." And that is the beginning and the end of the philosophy and the art of James Branch Cabell.*

It is, as I have said, both easy and difficult to make a book of beautiful selections from the writings of Cabell; easy because so much of his work is beautiful, difficult because the editor is bewildered by the richness of the material to choose from. Since this book is Mr. Cabell's and in no sense mine, I am at liberty to praise it. And I do praise it in these terms: If the selections are not, and cannot be, all the best of Cabell, they are all good Cabell. And that means that this book is one of the finest volumes of prose in our language and the most distinguished volume in American literature in the twentieth century; unless, indeed, some single volume of the Biography may be, by the added virtue of organic completeness, still more distinguished. Here at least is enough to show the poetic imagination, the incomparably lovely and fluent rhythms, the command of words for their precise meanings and for their sound and color. Here is enough to tempt the reader who happens not to know Cabell as a whole to read him at large without editorial intervention. That is the real service of an anthology.

*The selections are chapter units, in some cases several sequent chapters, so that no passage, however incomplete in relation to the whole, seems to have been torn with bleeding edges from its context. Since Mr. Cabell makes frequent use of a row of periods . . . as a device of style, I have employed asterisks * * * to indicate omissions for which the editor is responsible. In the few cases where such hiatuses occur the editorial motive has usually been to save space for something even better than what has been left out. The text reproduces accurately that of the Storisende edition. For convenience of reference and identification, the numbering of sections and chapters is, in most of the selections, also that of the Storisende text.*

JOHN MACY.

New York,
May, 1930

FROM

Beyond Life

THE DEMIURGE

THE ECONOMIST

WHAT WE ASK OF LITERATURE

THE *sentence from which Cabell takes the title of the Prologue to the Biography of Manuel is in Milton's* Areopagitica: *"Many a man lives a burden to the earth: but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life." However well* Beyond Life *may serve as an introduction to the twenty volumes, the book is, by itself, a literary essay of such excellent originality as I have not found elsewhere in our time. The first selection, "The Demiurge," is the whole of the second chapter. The second extract, "The Economist," is almost the whole of the fourth chapter, from which three sections, one dealing especially with Villon, are here reluctantly omitted. We meet Villon again on the road through Mispec Moor in* Something About Eve, *and in the episode in* The Line of Love, *called "In Necessity's Mortar." Marlowe figures in the same book, in the charming tale, "Porcelain Cups." The third passage here chosen from* Beyond Life *is the end of the book and sums up, not too conclusively, what the whole business of writing and reading literature tends to. The three selections, if not the only high points in the discourse, do give an idea of its total content, though they necessarily fail to represent its solid coherence, a coherence which is none the less compact and closely developed because the style is spoken, casual, apparently impromptu.* Beyond Life *is a sort of New Defence of Poetry, or, as Charteris more modestly calls it, a "working-code of romance."*

J. M.

THE DEMIURGE

§ 11

OFF-HAND (began John Charteris), I would say that books are best insured against oblivion through practise of the auctorial virtues of distinction and clarity, of beauty and symmetry, of tenderness and truth and urbanity. That covers the ground, I think: and so it remains merely to cite supporting instances here and there, by mentioning a few writers who have observed these requirements, and thus to substantiate my formula without unnecessary divagation. . . .

Therefore I shall be very brief. And even so, I imagine, you will not be inclined to listen to much of what I am about to say, if only because, like most of us, you are intimidated by that general attitude toward culture and the humanities which has made of American literature, among foreign penmen, if not precisely an object of despairing envy, at least of feeling comment. In particular, I imagine that my frequent references to the affairs and people of fled years will annoy you, since the American book-purchaser shies from such pedantic, and indeed from any, allusion to the past, with that distrust peculiar to persons with criminal records. In fact, this murderer, too, is often haunted, I daresay, by memories of his victim, in thinking of the time he has killed, whether with the "uplifting" or with the "daring" current novels of yesterday.

But you perceive, I trust, that your personal indifference, and the lazy contempt of America as a whole, toward art matters no more affects the eternal verity and the eternal importance of art than do the religious practises of Abyssinia, say, affect the verity and importance of the New Testament. You perceive, I trust, that you ought to be interested in art matters, whatever is your actual emotion. You understand, in fine—as a mere abstract principle—what your feeling "ought to be." Well, it is precisely that tendency to imagine yourself and your emotions as these things "ought to be"

which convicts you, over any verbal disclaimer, of a vital interest in art matters: and it is that tendency about which I propose to speak very briefly. . . .

And yet, so insidious is the influence of general opinion, even when manifested as plain unreason, that, I confess, whenever anyone talks of "art" and "æsthetic theories," I myself am inclined to find him vaguely ridiculous, and to detect in every word he utters a flavor of affectation. So should you prove quite as susceptible as I to the herd-instinct I shall have no ground for complaint. Meanwhile in theory—without of necessity accompanying my friend Felix Kennaston all the way to his conclusion that the sum of corporeal life represents an essay in romantic fiction,—I can perceive plainly enough that the shape-giving principle of all sentient beings is artistic. That is a mere matter of looking at living creatures and noticing their forms. . . . But the principle goes deeper, in that it shapes too the minds of men, by this universal tendency to imagine—and to think of as in reality existent—all the tenants of earth and all the affairs of earth, not as they are, but "as they ought to be." And so it comes about that romance has invariably been the demiurgic and beneficent force, not merely in letters, but in every matter which concerns mankind; and that "realism," with its teaching that the mile-posts along the road are as worthy of consideration as the goal, has always figured as man's chief enemy. . . .

§ 12

Indeed, that scathing criticism which Sophocles passed, howsoever anciently, on a contemporary, remains no less familiar than significant,—"He paints men as they are: I paint them as they ought to be." It is aside from the mark that in imputing such veracity to Euripides the singer of Colonos was talking nonsense: the point is that Sophocles saw clearly what was, and what continues to be, the one unpardonable sin against art and human welfare.

For the Greeks, who were nurtured among art's masterworks, recognized, with much of that perturbing candor wherewith children everywhere appraise their associates, that gracefully to prevaricate about mankind and human existence was art's signal function. As a by-product of this perception, Hellenic literature restrained its endeavors, quite naturally, to embroidering events

that were incontestable because time had erased the evidence for or against their actual occurrence: and the poets, in their quest of protagonists worth noble handling, evoked them from bright mists of antiquity, wherethrough, as far as went existent proofs, men might in reality have moved "as they ought to be." Thus, even Homer, the most ancient of great verbal artists, elected to deal with legends that in his day were venerable: and in Homer when Ajax lifts a stone it is with the strength of ten warriors, and Odysseus, when such a procedure at all promotes the progress of the story, becomes invisible. It seems—upon the whole,—less probable that Homer drew either of these accomplishments from the actual human life about him, than from simple consciousness that it would be very gratifying if men could do these things. And, indeed, as touches enduring art, to write "with the eye upon the object" appears a relatively modern pretence, perhaps not unconnected with the coetaneous phrase of "all my eye."

Then, when the Attic drama came to flowerage, the actors were masked, so that their features might display unhuman perfection; the actors were mounted upon cothurni, to lend impressiveness to man's physical mediocrity; and the actors were clothed in draperies which philanthropically eclipsed humanity's frugal graces. In painting or sculpture, where the human body could be idealized with a free hand, the Greek rule was nakedness: in drama, where the artist's material was incorrigible flesh, there was nothing for it save to disguise the uncaptivating groundwork through some discreet employment of fair apparel. Thus only could the audience be hoodwinked into forgetting for a while what men and women really looked like. In drama, therefore, Theseus declaimed in imperial vestments, and in sculpture wore at the very most a fig-leaf. It is hardly necessary to point out that the Greeks shared few of our delusions concerning "decency": for, of course, they had no more moral aversion to a man's appearing naked in the street than to a toad's doing so, and objected simply on the ground that both were ugly. So they resolutely wrote about—and carved and painted, for that matter—men "as they ought to be" doing such things as it would be gratifying for men to do if these feats were humanly possible. . . . And in the twilit evening of Greek literature you will find Theocritus clinging with unshaken ardor to

unreality, and regaling the townfolk of Alexandria with tales of an improbable Sicily, where the inhabitants are on terms of friendly intimacy with cyclopes, water-nymphs and satyrs.

§ 13

Equally in the Middle Ages did literature avoid deviation into the credible. When carpets of brocade were spread in April meadows it was to the end that barons and ladies might listen with delight to peculiarly unplausible accounts of how Sire Roland held the pass at Roncevaux single-handed against an army, and of Lancelot's education at the bottom of a pond by elfin pedagogues, and of how Virgil builded Naples upon eggshells. When English-speaking tale-tellers began to concoct homespun romances they selected such themes as Bevis of Southampton's addiction to giant-killing, and Guy of Warwick's encounter with a man-eating cow eighteen feet long, and the exploits of Thomas of Reading, who exterminated an infinity of dragons and eloped with Prester John's daughter after jilting the Queen of Fairyland. Chaucer, questionless, was so injudicious as to dabble in that muddy stream of contemporaneous happenings which time alone may clarify: but the parts of Chaucer that endure are a Knight's story of mythological events, a Prioress's unsubstantiated account of a miracle, a Nun's Priest's anticipation of Rostand's barnyard fantasy, and a ream or two of other delightful flimflams. From his contemporaries Chaucer got such matter as the Miller's tale of a clerk's misadventures in osculation.

§ 14

But with the invention of printing, thoughts spread so expeditiously that it became possible to acquire quite serviceable ideas without the trouble of thinking: and very few of us since then have cared to risk impairment of our minds by using them. A consequence was that, with inaction, man's imagination in general grew more sluggish, and demurred, just as mental indolence continues to balk, over the exertion of conceiving an unfamiliar *locale,* in any form of art. The deterioration, of course, was gradual, and for a considerable while theatrical audiences remained receptively illiterate. And it seems at first sight gratifying to note that for a lengthy period Marlowe was the most "popular" of the Elizabethan play-

wrights: for in Marlowe's superb verse there is really very little to indicate that the writer had ever encountered any human beings, and certainly nothing whatever to show that he had seriously considered this especial division of fauna: whereas all his scenes are laid somewhere a long way west of the Hesperides. Yet Marlowe's popularity, one cannot but suspect, was furthered by unæsthetic aids, in divers "comic" scenes which time has beneficently destroyed. At all events, complaisant dramatists, out of a normal preference for butter with their daily bread, soon began to romance about contemporary life. It is not Shakespeare's least claim to applause that he sedulously avoided doing anything of the sort. To the other side, being human, Shakespeare was not untainted by the augmenting trend toward "realism," and in depicting his fellows was prone to limit himself to exaggeration of their powers of fancy and diction. This, as we now know, is a too sparing employment of untruthfulness: and there is ground for sharp arraignment of the imbecility attributed to Lear, and Othello, and Hamlet, and Macbeth, and Romeo—to cite only a few instances,—by any candid estimate of their actions, when deprived of the transfiguring glow wherewith Shakespeare invests what is being done, by evoking a haze of lovely words. For, really, to go mad because a hostess resents your bringing a hundred servants on a visit, or to murder your wife because she has misplaced a handkerchief, is much the sort of conduct which is daily chronicled by the morning-paper; and in charity to man's self-respect should be restricted to the ostentatious impermanence of journalism. But at bottom Shakespeare never displayed any very hearty admiration for humanity as a race, and would seem to have found not many more commendable traits in general exercise among mankind than did the authors of the Bible.

Few of the art-reverencing Elizabethans, however, or of the earlier Jacobeans, handled the surrounding English life: when they dealt with the contemporaneous it was with a reassuringly remote Italian background, against which almost anything might be supposed to happen, in the way of picturesque iniquity and poisoned wine: so that they composed with much of that fine irresponsibility wherewith American journalists expose the court-life of Madrid and Vienna. But the maturing Jacobean drama, under

the insidious and dreadful influence of common-sense, tended spasmodically toward untruths about the workaday life of its audience,—with such depressing results as *Hyde Park, The Roaring Girl* and *The New Inn,* by men who in the field of unrestricted imagination had showed themselves to be possessed of genuine ability. It should always be remembered in favor of the Puritans that when they closed the theatres "realism" was sprawling upon the stage.

§ 15

Then came the gallant protest of the Restoration, when Wycherley and his successors in drama, commenced to write of contemporary life in much the spirit of modern musical comedy, which utilizes a fac-simile of the New York Pennsylvania Railway Station, or of the Capitol at Washington, as an appropriate setting for a ballet and a comedian's colloquy with the orchestra leader. Thus here the scenes are in St. James's Park, outside Westminster, in the New Exchange, and in other places familiar to the audience; and the characters barter jokes on current events: but the laws of the performer's mimic existence are frankly extra-mundane, and their antics, in Restoration days as now, would have subjected the perpetrators to immediate arrest upon the auditorial side of footlights. A great deal of queer nonsense has been printed concerning the comedy of Gallantry, upon the startling assumption that its authors copied the life about them. It is true that Wycherley, in this well-nigh the first of English authors to go astray, began the pernicious practise of depicting men as being not very much better than they actually are: of that I will speak later: but Wycherley had the saving grace to present his men and women as trammeled by the social restrictions of Cloud-Cuckoo-Land alone. And, were there nothing else, it seems improbable that Congreve, say, really believed that every young fellow spoke habitually in terms of philosophic wit and hated his father; and that every old hunks possessed, more or less vicariously, a beautiful second wife; and that people married without noticing either that the parson or the bride was a familiar acquaintance pretending to be somebody else; and that monetary competence and happiness and all-important documents, as well as a sudden turn for heroic verse, were regularly accorded to everybody toward eleven o'clock in the evening.

§ 16

Thus far the illiterate ages, when as yet so few persons could read that literature tended generally toward the acted drama. The stage could supply much illusory assistance, in the way of pads and wigs and grease-paints and soft lightings, toward making men appear heroic and women charming: but, after all, the rôles were necessarily performed by human beings, and the charitable deceit was not continuous. The audience was ever and anon being reminded, against its firm-set will, that men were mediocre creatures.

Nor could the poets, howsoever rapidly now multiplied their verse-books, satisfactorily delude their patrons into overlooking this unpleasant fact. For one reason or another, men as a whole have never taken kindly to printed poetry: most of us are unable to put up with it at all, and even to the exceptional person verse after an hour's reading becomes unaccountably tiresome. Prose—for no very patent cause—is much easier going. So the poets proved ineffectual comforters, who could but rarely and but for a brief while bedrug even the few to whom their charms did not seen gibberish.

With the advent of the novel, all this was changed. Not merely were you relieved from metrical fatigue, but there came no commonplace flesh-and-blood to give the lie to the artist's pretensions. It was possible, really for the first time, acceptably to present in literature men "as they ought to be." Richardson could dilate as unrestrainedly as he pleased upon the super-eminence in virtue and sin, respectively, of his Grandison and his Lovelace emboldened by the knowledge that there was nothing to check him off save the dubious touchstone of his reader's common-sense. Fielding was not only able to conduct a broad-shouldered young ruffian to fortune and a lovely wife, but could moreover endow Tom Jones with all sorts of heroic and estimable qualities such as (in mere unimportant fact) rascals do not display in actual life. When the novel succeeded the drama it was no longer necessary for the artist to represent human beings with even partial veracity: and this new style of writing at once became emblematic.

And so it has been ever since. Novelists have severally evolved their pleasing symbols wherewith approximately to suggest human beings and the business of human life, much as remote Egyptians

drew serrated lines to convey the idea of water and a circle to indicate eternity. The symbols have often varied: but there has rarely been any ill-advised attempt to depict life as it seems in the living of it, or to crystallize the vague notions and feeble sensations with which human beings, actually, muddle through to an epitaph; if only because all sensible persons, obscurely aware that this routine is far from what it ought to be, have always preferred to deny its existence. Moreover, we have come long ago to be guided in any really decisive speech or action by what we have read somewhere; and so, may fairly claim that literature should select (as it does) such speeches and such actions as typical of our essential lives, rather than the gray interstices, which we perforce fill in extempore, and botch.

As concerns the novelists of the day before yesterday, this evasion of veracity is already more or less conceded: the "platitudinous heroics" of Scott and the "exaggerated sentimentalism" of Dickens are notorious in quiet authoritative circles whose *ducdame* is the honest belief that art is a branch of pedagogy. Thackeray, as has been pointed out elsewhere, avoids many a logical outcome of circumstance, when recognition thereof would be inconvenient, by killing off somebody and blinding the reader with a tear-drenched handkerchief. And when we sanely appraise the most cried-up writer of genteel "realism," matters are not conducted much more candidly. Here is a fair sample:—"From the very beginning of my acquaintance with you, your manners, impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others, were such as to form that groundwork of disapprobation on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike, and I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry." It is Miss Austen's most famous, most beloved, and most "natural" character replying—not by means of a stilted letter, but colloquially, under the stress of emotion—to a proposal of marriage by the man she loves. This is a crisis which in human life a normal young woman simply does not meet with any such rhetorical architecture. . . . So there really seems small ground for wonder that Mr. Darcy observed, "You have said quite enough, madam"; and no cause whatever for surprise that he

hastily left the room, and was heard to open the front-door and quit the house. . . . Yet, be it forthwith added, Scott and Dickens and Thackeray, and even Miss Austen, were in the right, from one or another æsthetic standpoint, in thus variously editing and revising their contemporaries' unsatisfactory disposition of life. Indeed, upon no plea could they be bound to emulate malfeasance.

Criticism as to the veracity of more recent writers is best dismissed with the well-merited commendation that novelists to-day continue rigorously to respect the Second Commandment. Meanwhile it may, with comparative safety, be pointed out that no interred writer of widely conceded genius has ever displayed in depicting the average of human speech and thought and action, and general endowments, such exactness as would be becoming in an affidavit; but rather, when his art touched on these dangerous topics, has regarded romantic prevarication as a necessity. The truth about ourselves is the one truth, above all others, which we are adamantine not to face. And this determination springs, not wholly from vanity, but from a profound race-sense that by such denial we have little to lose, and a great deal to gain.

§ 17

For, as has been said before, an inveterate Sophocles notes clearly that veracity is the one unpardonable sin, not merely against art, but against human welfare. . . . You will observe that the beginnings of fiction everywhere, among all races, take with curious unanimity the same form. It is always the history of the unlooked-for achievements and the ultimate, very public triumph of the ill-used youngest son. From the myth of Zeus, third son of Chronos, to the third prince of the fairy-tale, there is no exception. Everywhere it is to the despised weakling that romance accords the final and very public victory. For in the life-battle for existence it was of course the men of puniest build who first developed mental ability, since hardier compeers, who took with bloodied hands that which they wanted, had no especial need of less reliable makeshifts: and everywhere this weakling, quite naturally, afforded himself in imagination what the force of circumstance denied him in fact. Competent persons, then as now, had neither the time nor ability for literature.

By and by a staggering stroke of genius improved the tale by adding the handicap of sex-weakness: and Cinderella (whom romance begot and deified as Psyche) straightway led captive every dreamer's hitherto unvoiced desire. This is the most beloved story in the world's library, and, barring a tremendous exception to which I shall presently return, will always remain without rival. Any author anywhere can gain men's love by remodeling (not too drastically) the history of Cinderella: thousands of calligraphic persons have, of course, availed themselves of this fortunate circumstance: and the seeming miracle is that the naïve and the most sophisticated continue to thrill, at each re-telling of the hackneyed story, with the instant response of fiddlestrings, to an interpretation of life which one is tempted to describe as fiddlesticks. Yet an inevitable, very public triumph of the downtrodden—with all imaginable pomp and fanfare—is of necessity a tenet generally acceptable to a world of ineffectual inhabitants, each one of whom is a monarch of dreams incarcerated in a prison of flesh; and each of whom is hourly fretted, no less by the indifference of nature to his plight, than by the irrelevancy thereto of those social orderings he dazedly ballots into existence. . . . Christianity, with its teaching that the oppressed shall be exalted, and the unhappy made free of eternal bliss, thus came in the nick of occasion, to promise what the run of men were eager to believe. Such a delectable prospect, irrespective of its plausibility, could not in the nature of things fail to become popular: as has been strikingly attested by man's wide acceptance of the rather exigent requirements of Christianity, and his honest endeavors ever since to interpret them as meaning whatever happens to be convenient.

In similar fashion, humanity would seem at an early period to have wrenched comfort from prefiguring man as the hero of the cosmic romance. For it was unpleasantly apparent that man did not excel in physical strength, as set against the other creatures of a planet whereon may be encountered tigers and elephants. His senses were of low development, as compared with the senses of insects: and, indeed, senses possessed by some of these small contemporaries man presently found he did not share, nor very clearly understand. The luxury of wings, and even the common comfort of a caudal appendage, was denied him. He walked painfully, with-

out hoofs, and, created naked as a shelled almond, with difficulty outlived a season of inclement weather. Physically, he displayed in not a solitary trait a product of nature's more ambitious labor. . . . He, thus, surpassed the rest of vital creation in nothing except, as was beginning to be rumored, the power to reason; and even so, was apparently too magnanimous to avail himself of the privilege.

But to acknowledge such disconcerting facts would never do: just as inevitably, therefore, as the pea-fowl came to listen with condescension to the nightingale, and the tortoise to deplore the slapdash ways of his contemporaries, man probably began very early to regale himself with flattering narratives as to his nature and destiny. Among the countless internecine animals that roamed earth, puissant with claw and fang and sinew, an ape reft of his tail, and grown rusty at climbing, was the most formidable, and in the end would triumph. It was of course considered blasphemous to inquire into the grounds for this belief, in view of its patent desirability, for the race was already human. So the prophetic portrait of man treading among cringing plesiosauri to browbeat a frightened dinosaur was duly scratched upon the cave's wall, and art began forthwith to accredit human beings with every trait and destiny which they desiderated. . . .

And so to-day, as always, we delight to hear about invincible men and women of unearthly loveliness—corrected and considerably augmented versions of our family circle,—performing feats illimitably beyond our modest powers. And so to-day no one upon the preferable side of Bedlam wishes to be reminded of what we are in actuality, even were it possible, by any disastrous miracle, ever to dispel the mist which romance has evoked about all human doings; and to the golden twilight of which old usage has so accustomed us that, like nocturnal birds, our vision grows perturbed in a clearer atmosphere. And we have come very firmly to believe in the existence of men everywhere, not as in fact they are, but "as they ought to be."

§ 18

Now art, like all the other noteworthy factors in this remarkable world, serves in the end utilitarian purposes. When a trait is held up as desirable, for a convincingly long while, the average person, out

of self-respect, pretends to possess it: with time, he acts letter-perfect as one endowed therewith, and comes unshakably to believe that it has guided him from infancy. For while everyone is notoriously swayed by appearances, this is more especially true of his own appearance: cleanliness is, if not actually next to godliness, so far a promoter of benevolence that no man feels upon quite friendly terms with his fellow-beings when conscious that he needs a shave; and if in grief you resolutely contort your mouth into a smile you somehow do become forthwith aware of a considerable mitigation of misery. . . . So it is that man's vanity and hypocrisy and lack of clear thinking are in a fair way to prove in the outcome his salvation.

All is vanity, quoth the son of David, inverting the truth for popular consumption, as became a wise Preacher who knew that vanity is all. For man alone of animals plays the ape to his dreams. That a dog dreams vehemently is matter of public knowledge: it is perfectly possible that in his more ecstatic visions he usurps the shape of his master, and visits Elysian pantries in human form: with awakening, he observes that in point of fact he is a dog, and as a rational animal, makes the best of canineship. But with man the case is otherwise, in that when logic leads to any humiliating conclusion, the sole effect is to discredit logic.

So has man's indomitable vanity made a harem of his instincts, and walled off a seraglio wherein to beget the virtues and refinements and all ennobling factors in man's long progress from gorillaship. As has been suggested, creative literature would seem to have sprung simply from the instinct of any hurt animal to seek revenge,—and "to get even," as the phrase runs, in the field of imagination when such revenge was not feasible in any other arena. . . . Then, too, it is an instinct common to brute creatures that the breeding or even the potential mother must not be bitten, —upon which modest basis a little by a little mankind builded the fair code of domnei, or woman-worship, which for so long a while did yeoman service among legislators toward keeping half our citizens "out of the mire of politics," and which still enables any reputable looking married woman to kill whatsoever male she elects with impunity. From the shuddering dread that beasts manifest toward uncomprehended forces, such as wind and thunder and

tall waves, man developed religion, and a consoling assurance of divine paternity. And when you come to judge what he made of sexual desire, appraising the deed in view as against the wondrous overture of courtship and that infinity of high achievements which time has seen performed as grace-notes, words fail before his egregious thaumaturgy. For after any such stupendous bit of hocus-pocus, there seems to be no limit fixed to the conjurations of human vanity.

§ 19

And these aspiring notions blended, a great while since, into what may be termed the Chivalrous attitude toward life. Thus it is that romance, the real demiurge, the first and loveliest daughter of human vanity, contrives all those dynamic illusions which are used to further the ultimate ends of romance. . . . The cornerstone of Chivalry I take to be the idea of vicarship: for the chivalrous person is, in his own eyes at least, the child of God, and goes about this world as his Father's representative in an alien country. It was very adroitly to human pride, through an assumption of man's personal responsibility in his tiniest action, that Chivalry made its appeal; and exhorted every man to keep faith, not merely with the arbitrary will of a strong god, but with himself. There is no cause for wonder that the appeal was irresistible, when to each man it thus admitted that he himself was the one thing seriously to be considered. . . . So man became a chivalrous animal; and about this flattering notion of divine vicarship builded his elaborate mediæval code, to which, in essentials, a great number of persons adhere even nowadays. Questionless, however, the Chivalrous attitude does not very happily fit in with modern conditions, whereby the self-elected obligations of the knight-errant toward repressing evil are (in theory at all events) more efficaciously discharged by an organized police and a jury system.

And perhaps it was never, quite, a "practical" attitude,—no, *mais quel geste!* as was observed by a pre-eminently chivalrous person. At worst, it is an attitude which one finds very taking to the fancy as the posture is exemplified by divers mediæval chroniclers, who had sound notions about portraying men "as they ought to be." . . . There is Nicolas de Caen, for instance, who in his *Dizain des Reines* (with which I am familiar, I confess, in the English version

alone) presents with some naïveté this notion of divine vicarship, in that he would seem to restrict it to the nobility and gentry. "For, royal persons and their immediate associates," Dom Nicolas assumes at outset, "are the responsible stewards of Heaven": and regarding them continuously as such, he selects from the lives of various queens ten crucial moments wherein (as Nicolas phrases it), "Destiny has thrust her sceptre into the hands of a human being, and left the weakling free to steer the pregnant outcome. Now prove thyself to be at bottom a god or else a beast, saith Destiny, and now eternally abide that choice." Yet this, and this alone, when you come to think of it, is what Destiny says, not merely to "royal persons and their immediate associates," but to everyone. . . . And in his *Roman de Lusignan* Nicolas deals with that quaint development of the Chivalrous attitude to which I just alluded, that took form, as an allied but individual illusion, in domnei, or woman-worship; and found in a man's mistress an ever-present reminder, and sometimes a rival of God. There is something not unpathetic in the thought that this once world-controlling force is restricted to-day to removing a man's hat in an elevator and occasionally compelling a surrender of his seat in a streetcar. . . . But this *Roman de Lusignan* also has been put into English, with an Afterword by the translator wherein the theories of domnei are rather painstakingly set forth: and thereto I shall presently recur, for further consideration of this illusion of domnei.

Always, of course, the Chivalrous attitude was an intelligent attitude, in which one spun romances and accorded no meticulous attention to mere facts. . . . For thus to spin romances is to bring about, in every sense, man's recreation, since man alone of animals can, actually, acquire a trait by assuming, in defiance of reason, that he already possesses it. To spin romances is, indeed, man's proper and peculiar function in a world wherein he only of created beings can make no profitable use of the truth about himself. For man alone of animals plays the ape to his dreams. So he fares onward chivalrously, led by ignes fatui no doubt, yet moving onward. And that the goal remains ambiguous seems but a trivial circumstance to any living creature who knows, he knows not how, that to stay still can be esteemed a virtue only in the dead.

§ 20

Indeed, when I consider the race to which I have the honor to belong, I am filled with respectful wonder. . . . All about us flows and gyrates unceasingly the material universe,—an endless inconceivable jumble of rotatory blazing gas and frozen spheres and detonating comets, wherethrough spins Earth like a frail midge. And to this blown molecule adhere what millions and millions and millions of parasites just such as I am, begetting and dreaming and slaying and abnegating and toiling and making mirth, just as did aforetime those countless generations of our forebears, every one of whom was likewise a creature just such as I am! Were the human beings that have been subjected to confinement in flesh each numbered, as is customary in other penal institutes, with what interminable row of digits might one set forth your number, say, or mine?

Nor is this everything. For my reason, such as it is, perceives this race, in its entirety, in the whole outcome of its achievement, to be beyond all wording petty and ineffectual: and no more than thought can estimate the relative proportion to the material universe of our poor Earth, can thought conceive with what quintillionths to express that fractional part which I, as an individual parasite, add to Earth's negligible fretting by ephemeræ.

And still—behold the miracle!—still I believe life to be a personal transaction between myself and Omnipotence; I believe that what I do is somehow of importance; and I believe that I am on a journey toward some very public triumph not unlike that of the third prince in the fairy-tale. . . . Even to-day I believe in this dynamic illusion. For that creed was the first great inspiration of the demiurge,—man's big romantic idea of Chivalry, of himself as his Father's representative in an alien country;—and it is a notion at which mere fact and reason yelp denial unavailingly. For every one of us is so constituted that he knows the romance to be true, and corporal fact and human reason in this matter, as in divers others, to be the suborned and perjured witnesses of "realism."

THE ECONOMIST

§ 31

All the legends I have mentioned, however, were in large part the figments of poets, so that no doubt they have been misinterpreted. For the visionary matter-of-fact people who rule the world have from the beginning misapprehended each and every matter connected with those chillingly astute persons, the poets. . . . It was the penetrative common-sense of poets, as not very generally recognized, that I had in mind a few minutes ago, when I spoke of Christopher Marlowe, and when I referred to the *Faustus* as justifying any conceivable practises without which we had lacked this drama. You appeared at the time to think that a rather sweeping statement, but there is no question as to its truth. And in order to make this truth quite plain to you, I shall for a moment divert your attention to Christopher Marlowe, as a specific instance of what I have in mind, as to another dynamic illusion. . . .

I select Marlowe as my text, from among a host of names which would serve my purpose, because Marlowe, I imagine, is to you, as through our criminal folly he is to most of us, but one of the poets in the English Literature course at college; and ranks now with chapel attendance and Greek particles and other happily outgrown annoyances. Improvident and wasteful as this is in us, I hardly wonder. No poet has been more worthily praised by more competent persons: but, for all that, Marlowe remains unappreciated, on account of our general human habit of appraising everything from irrelevant standpoints. Thus people think of Marlowe simply as a poet, whereas his real daring, like that of all the elect among creative writers, was displayed as an economist. And it is the economy of such poets that I must pause to explain.

§ 32

Now most of the phrases which we utilize as substitutes for ideas were coined by those short-sighted persons who somehow con-

found economy with monetary matters: and among these for an incomprehensibly long while it has been the custom to encourage the shiftless cult of mediocrity. Age-honored precepts and all reputable proverbs concur in stating that a staid and common-sense course of life should be pursued, upon the indisputable ground that this is the surest avenue to a sufficiency of creature comforts: and, indeed, if men had ever taken the corporeal circumstances of their existence very seriously people would long ago have become as indistinguishable from one another as cheese-mites. Since Attica was young the "middle road" has been commended by sages and schoolmasters, by vestrymen and grandparents and bankers, and all the other really responsible constituents of society: and yet, as I need hardly point out, it has been the deviators from the highway, the strayers in by-paths and even in posted woodlands, whom men, led by instinctive wisdom, have elected to commemorate. To venture just such a mythological allusion as nowadays infuriates the reader, Clio with feminine perversity has insisted on singing the praises of those who have flown in the face of convention, and have notoriously violated every rule for securing an epitaph in which they might take reasonable pride. . . . But no form of greatness is appreciable save in perspective. If your house be builded upon the side of a mountain you must leave home in order to discover the mountain's actual contour: and to a many contemporaries Homer could not but seem a beggarly street-door singer, and Jeanne Darc an ill-mannered trollop with not at all ambiguous reasons for consorting with lewd soldiers. Genius, like Niagara, is thus most majestic from a distance: and indeed, if the flights of genius are immeasurable, its descents are equally fathomless.

This would appear particularly true of that creative literary genius whereby the human brain is perverted to uses for which, as first planned against arboreal requirements, it was perhaps not especially designed. At all events, very few of our time-honored authors were esteemed as ornaments of the drawing-room, howsoever bravely they now figure in the library; but were by the more solid element of society quite generally avoided as loose fish, on the probably Irish analogue of their preference of other beverages to water. For, whatever one might desire the case to have been, there is really no doubt that in the production of an astoundingly large

number of literary masterworks alcohol played the midwife. Equally, at first sight, the only possible way for any reputable connoisseur of art to confront this unpleasant truth was to deny its existence: and the expedient has been adopted in pedagogic circles with pleasing unanimity. The rest of us are well content to take our poets as we find them: and have no call to explain the origin of "unsubstantiated traditions" as to Shakespeare, and "calumnies of Griswold" concerning Poe, and "Bacchic myths" about Æschylos, and "the symbolic vine" of Omar, nor otherwise laboriously to cull from the sands of time a little dust to throw in our own eyes.

§ 33

Marlowe, however, quite incontestably, according to every surviving record of his day, wasted health and repute, and even lost his life, in the pursuit of pot-house dissipation. It is unfair that, after following the onerous routine familiar to every student of poetic biography, Marlowe should be accorded no very general consideration as an economist. . . . Of course few poets have escaped the charge of writing by virtue of "inspiration": and minor rhymesters, naturally enough, have fostered this balderdash, in extenuation of what they would be thought to have published under the influence of disease. But it is really too much that Christopher Marlowe should be regarded as a dissolute wastrel afflicted with rhetorical epilepsy, during fits of which he wrote his *Hero and Leander* and his *Faustus*. Even his undeniable achievements are insidiously belittled when he is accredited with starting various hares which Shakespeare and Goethe and divers other better-winded bards ran down,—or, somewhat to jumble similes, with being the crude ore from which they extracted more or less metal, to be cast by them into enduring forms. Such belittlement is insidious, be it repeated, because this idea possesses, by ill luck, the one misleading grain of truth with which it is so difficult to deal quite justly. For it is indisputable that great poets have borrowed with a high hand from Marlowe, and—with an adroitness hereabouts distinctive of great poets,—have looked to it that where they pilfered they improved. It is equally indisputable that Christopher Marlowe was one of the supreme artists of literature.

He was an artist who labored, with sincere and appreciative

reverence for his labor's worthiness, in the very highest fields of creative writing. And it is really an inconsiderable matter that his dramas are failures in that they patently do not attain to the original conception. The shortcoming is bred, not by inferior workmanship, for in technique Marlowe excelled, but by the reach of his conception, which in cold earnest was superhuman. And finally, Marlowe himself has answered this criticism, once for all, in Tamburlaine's superb rhapsody beginning *If all the pens that ever poets held,*—which I forbear to quote, because, for your æsthetic enrichment, it is preferable that you search out and read these thirteen lines with painstaking consideration. For thus you will come by sure knowledge of what "poetry" actually is, and must remain always. . . . Indeed, as you may with profit remember, the conclusive verdict as to this tirade has been rendered by an attestedly competent judge: "In the most glorious verses now fashioned by a poet to express with subtle and final truth the supreme limit of his art, Marlowe has summed up all that can be said or thought on the office and the object, the means and the end, of this highest form of spiritual ambition." And Swinburne, for once, really appears to speak with moderation.

But I intend both here and hereafter to avoid that dreary thing called literary criticism, and to make no effort toward defining the faults and merits of the various writers to whom I may allude. I shall not analyze, compare or appraise any of them. Instead, I shall but educe them as illustrations of my theory as to the working-code of romance, and shall consider them from that sole viewpoint. So, in deliberating the economy of Marlowe, it is eminently necessary here to emphasize the fact that his fine genius was exercised worthily. It is not unreasonable, indeed, to assert that he has had no equal anywhere. To consider—as after any such statement seems unavoidable—the possibility that, had Marlowe lived to attain maturity, he might to-day have been as tritely gabbled about as Shakespeare, is rather on a plane with debating "what song the Sirens sang" or the kindred mystery of what becomes of political issues after election. Marlowe, precisely by virtue of his more sensitive genius, was predestinate to an early death. In so far as any comparison can be carried, the advantage is, of course, with Marlowe. He was a scant two months older than Shakespeare; and

all his wizardry was ended before the young fellow from Stratford had achieved anything notable. The highest aim of Shakespeare during Marlowe's lifetime was to poetize, as exactly as was humanly possible, in Marlowe's manner. It was by observing Marlowe that Shakespeare finally learned how to write: and Milton "formed himself" on the same model. Marlowe himself had no instructors, and no need of any.

To the other side, he displayed little of that gift for voicing platitudes in unforgettable terms, by virtue of which Shakespeare "comes home" to most of us, and still remains so universally quoted. Marlowe's utterance is lacking in that element of triteness without which no work of art can ever be of general appeal in a world of mostly mediocre people. Then, too, one shudders to consider what Marlowe would have made of Mercutio or Falstaff, for, *pacè* Swinburne, Marlowe was really not the foremost of English humorists. To the contrary, his plays are larded with quite dreadful scenes in prose, of which the only humorous feature nowadays seems to lurk in the fact that they were intended to be amusing. In the acting, there is no doubt that such rough-and-tumble fun found appreciative audience, just as it does to-day in the athletic comedy of our Sunday newspaper cartoons, and in the screened endeavors of our most popular moving-picture actors, who to the delight of crowded auditoriums throw custard pies and fall down several flights of stairs. . . . Nor may one fairly raise any question of art, this way or the other: Elizabethan dramatists labored under the necessity of making the audience laugh at certain intervals, and being unable to write comedy, Marlowe fulfilled a business obligation by concocting knockabout farce.

§ 34

There is a deal of other calamitous printed matter bearing his name, some of which he unquestionably wrote, to his admirers' discomfort, and much of which remains gratefully dubious. Upon these productions we need waste no more time than did the writer. But it here seems necessary, even at a dire risk of appearing sophomoric, briefly to enumerate such portions of Marlowe's work as the most precise cannot conscientiously refuse to weigh, as tangible achievements which now must serve, somewhat, to counterbalance the flung-away life of a shoemaker's oldest son.

First of course, if though but in seniority, comes *Tamburlaine the Great:* were there nothing else, the ten robustious acts of this astounding drama flow in a continuous stream of resonant verse such as has no parallel in literature, anywhere. And there is a great deal else, for the matter of the song is compact of all outlandish splendors,—a pageant, or rather a phantasmagoria, of hordes of warriors agleam in armor; of caliphs, viziers, bashaws, viceroys, and emirs; of naked negroes; of resplendent kings who are a little insane under the weight of their crowns; of hapless emperors imprisoned in curiously painted cages, and thus drawn about what was their kingdom yesterday, by milk-white steeds, the manes and tails of which have very carefully been dyed with men's blood; and of dream women that are more lovely than was Pygmalion's ivory girl. . . . To me at least it is pleasing to note that the "comic" scenes of *Tamburlaine* (which ranked among its main attractions as an acting drama) were purposely omitted by its publisher, and so have perished, because I have always contended that there was a certain amount of latent literary taste among publishers.

The Jew of Malta is quite as far removed from any atmosphere which was ever breathed by human lungs. No doubt this play is the fiasco of a Titan, in that, having perfected his conception of Barabbas, Marlowe was not able to find him fit employment; and so, set his Jew about a rather profitless series of assassinations and poisonings. One can but remember that when Barabbas was kidnapped, stripped of all his passionate feeling for material beauty, and re-named Shylock, Shakespeare made no better work of it by involving the Israelite in silly wagers and preposterous legal quibbles, over a pound of human flesh. Meanwhile through well-nigh every speech attributed to Barabbas glints something of the bright malignity of lightning.

Then there is the *Edward the Second,* which is to some of us an annoyingly "adequate" piece of writing; more elaborately builded, and more meticulously worked out, than is habitual with the author; and yet, when all is said, containing nothing pre-eminently characteristic of Marlowe. It is a marvelous example of the "chronicle-history" play; and in superb passages it abounds: but, as a whole—even though, here again, Shakespeare found a deal he considered well worth Autolycean handling—the drama seems to some of us not

quite unique, in the high fashion of its fellows. For the persons who appreciate Marlowe pay him the noble compliment of fretting over the spectacle of his doing work which merely surpasses that of other people in degree, rather than, as elsewhere, by its nature being inimitable.

And in that narrative poem, *Hero and Leander,* left uncompleted at his death, Marlowe revealed to Englishmen a then forgotten aspect of Grecian art,—by harking back, not to classic Greek ideals, but to the Greeks' fond and intimate scrutiny of the material world, and to exultance in the grateful form and color of lovely things when viewed precisely. It is not an ethic-ridden world he revivifies, this pleasant realm wherein beauty is the chief good of life, and life's paramount object is assumed to be that warfare in which women use not half their strength. For here it is upon bodily beauty at its perfection that Marlowe dwells, with fascinated delight. The physical charm of Hero, and every constituent of her loveliness (no less than every colorful detail of Venus's fair church of jasper-stone, which serves as appropriate framing for that loveliness), is expressed as vividly and carefully as is possible for the pen of a master craftsman: and even more deft, and more lovingly retouched, is the verbal portrait of "amorous Leander, beautiful and young." For as Marlowe here presents it, to be "beautiful and young" is, not merely the most desirable, but the unparalleled gift which life can bestow. And really, to each of us, with every dilapidating advance of time, the truth in this contention becomes no less increasingly apparent than does the necessity of concealing it. To Marlowe's finding, at any rate, wisdom and power and wealth and self-control are all very well, as the toys and solaces of maturity: but beauty in youth—being then at beauty's fullness,—alone is postulated to be worthy, less of desire, than of worship. And what men "foolishly do call virtuous" is thus relegated to a subsidiary position, in comparison with beauty, not as being in itself unimportant, but as being of no very potent value æsthetically.

Chiefly, however, the fame of Marlowe has been preserved by *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus.* And this is actually "poetic justice," for Marlowe is at his unrivaled best in rehandling the legend of the sorcerer who, in exchange for his soul, leased of the devil Mephistophilis a quarter-century tenure of superhuman

powers, and at the running out of his bond was carried off alive to hell. Now it must be noted that Marlowe thought this story as to what had happened in Würtenberg, no more than sixty years before the time at which he wrote, narrated plausible and established facts. The story told of a bargain which Marlowe believed was capable of consummation, by such "forward wits," at the very moment Marlowe wrote: and he no more questioned that as a result of this bargain Johan Faustus, after doing certain unusual things, was carried off alive to hell than you or I would think of denying that Napoleon, after doing certain unusual things, was carried off alive to St. Helena. But above all, it must be noted that the exploit which, as attributed to Faustus, most deeply impressed Marlowe was the evocation of Helen of Troy, in defiance of time and death, and any process of human reason, to be the wizard's mistress. For Marlowe believed in this feat also: and he found the man who had performed it enviable. To Marlowe—need I say?—Queen Helen, that lost proud darling of old nations whereamong she moved as a ruinous flame, pre-figured the witch-woman. The apostrophe of Faustus to Queen Helen, apart from the mere loveliness of words, thus pulsates with an emotion for which there is really no expression in human speech. In imagination the poet for one breathless moment, stands—as he perfectly believed, you must remember, that Johan Faustus had stood,—face to face with that flawless beauty of which all poets have perturbedly divined the existence somewhere, and which life, as men know it, simply does not afford, nor anywhere foresee. To Marlowe's mind, it was for this that Faustus pawned his soul, and drove no intolerable bargain: and the moral which Marlowe educes, wistfully, when all is over, is that a man must pay dearly for doing —not what Heaven disapproves of, as would speed the orthodox tag,—but that which Heaven nowadays does not permit. . . . Of course his hero technically "repents," with a considerable display of rhetoric; but not until his lease of enjoyment is quite run out, and hell is pyrotechnically agape: by the prosaic the ethical value of repentance for the necessity of discharging an ardently unpleasant debt may be questioned. There is really no trace of regret for the hellish compact until punishment therefor impends: and then, by a stupendous touch of irony, Faustus is dragged to torment

just as his parched lips pervert, to shriek his need, in terror-stricken babblement, that sugared and languorous verse which Ovid whispered in Corinna's arms, at the summit of life's felicity.

In short, this Christopher Marlowe was one of the supreme artists of literature. . . .

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§ 38

To some few of our multifarious race this futile body-wasting practised by kings and presidents and political parties, by ditch-diggers and milliners and shrewd men of business, seems irrational. The thriftier artist is resolved to get enduring increment of his body, and by means of that movable carcass which for a while he partially controls, to make something that may, with favoring luck, be permanent. Particularly does this incentive hearten the craftsman in that creative literature wherethrough a man perpetuates his dreams. In all other forms of chirographic exercise, wherein the scribe expresses his knowledge and ostensible opinions,—as in history or in philosophy or in love-letters or in novels that deal with "vital" problems or in tax interrogatories,—his writing is certain very soon to require revision into conformity with altered conditions, and is doomed ultimately to interest nobody. In the sister arts, there needs only a glance at the discolored canvases of Leonardo, or at the battered Venus of the Louvre, to show that here too time lies in wait to work disastrous alchemy. But the dream once written down, once snared with comely and fit words, may be perpetuated: its creator may usurp the brain-cells and prompt the flesh of generations born long after his own carnal loans are dust: and possibly he may do this—here is the lure—forever.

To authors who regard their art with actual reverence,—and who beyond doubt exaggerate its possibilities as prodigally as they do their own,—this then is the creative writer's goal: it is to bring about this that he utilizes his human brain and body: and it is to this end he devotes those impermanencies. By any creative writer, as has been said, the human brain is perverted to uses for which it was perhaps not especially designed: nor is it certain that the human body was originally planned as a device for making marks on paper. Thus the serious artist, as well as the contributor to those

justly popular magazines wherein the fiction is arranged, and to every appearance written, with a view of inducing people to read the advertisements, will very often damage his fleshly allotments in adapting them to serve his turn. And this would be a weighty consideration to the elect artist, who is above all else an economist, were a man's brain or body, by any possibility of hook or crook, and even in its present imperfection, to be retained by him. But these chattels, as the elect artist alone would seem to comprehend with any clarity, are but the loans of time, who in an indeterminable while will have need of his own. So always this problem confronts the creative writer, as to what compromise is permissible between his existence as an artist and his existence as an ephemeral animal. And this problem has the dubious distinction of being absolutely the only question no writer has ever settled, even to his own satisfaction. . . .

Nor is this all. Enduring literature, as it is necessary once more to point out in a land where reviewers so incessantly dogmatize as to this or that book's "truthfulness to life," does not consist of reportorial work. It is not a transcript of human speech and gesture, it is not even "true to life" in any four-square sense, nor are its materials to be drawn from the level of our normal and trivial doings. Hence, writers seldom establish their desks at street-corners, —which would seem the obvious course were it really anyone's business to copy human life,—but to the contrary, affect libraries, where they grumble over being disturbed by human intrusion. I shall presently come back to this vital falsity of "being true to life." . . . Meanwhile, the elect artist voluntarily purchases loneliness by a withdrawal from the plane of common life, since only in such isolation can he create. No doubt he takes with him his memories of things observed and things endured, which later may be utilized to lend plausibility and corroborative detail: but, precisely as in the Book of Genesis, here too the creator must begin *in vacuo*. And moreover, he must withdraw, for literary evaluation, to an attitude which is frankly abnormal. The viewpoint of "the man in the street" is really not the viewpoint of fine literature: their touchstones display very little more in common than is shared by the standards of lineal measure and avoirdupois weight: and for the greater part of every day, at meals, and in our family concerns, and

in all relations with human beings, each one of us is perforce "the man in the street." It is thus from his own normal viewpoint that the artist must withdraw. . . . And sometimes the mind goes of its own accord into this withdrawal, and reverie abstracts the creative writer from the ties and aspirations of his existence as a taxpayer. Of the pleasure he knows then one need not speak: but it is a noble pleasure. And sometimes the mind plays the refractory child, and clings pertinaciously to the belongings of workaday life; and abstraction will not come unaided. Then it would seem that this ruthlessly far-seeing economist induces such withdrawal by extraneous means (as people loosely say) as a matter of course, and by mere extension of the principle on which he closes his library door. . . . Of the pleasure he knows then one need not speak: but, then also, the pleasure is noble. For now he is conscious of stupendous notions: he comprehends the importance of writing down these notions as he alone can write them: and feeling himself to be a god, with eternity held in fee, he need not grudge the slow and comminuted labor of getting all his lovely words just right. And now he is for the while released from inhibitions which compel him ordinarily to affect agreement with the quaint irrationalities of "practical" persons. For in his sober senses, of course, the economist dare not ever be entirely himself, but must pretend to be, like everybody else, admiringly respectful of bankers and archbishops and brigadier-generals and presidents, as the highliest developed forms of humanity. So it is from his own double-dealing that he induces a withdrawal; and with drugs or alcohol unlocks the cell wherein his cowardice ordinarily imprisons his actual self. Nor with him does there appear to be any question of self-sacrifice or self-injury, since, as he can perceive with unmerciful clearness, a man's brain and body are no more a part of him than is the brandy or the opium. All are extraneous things; and are implements of which the economist makes use to serve his end. So the abstraction is induced, the dream is captured: and presently, of course, this withdrawal requires augmented prompting. . . . Thus the wind-whirl passes with heightened speed, and the dust it animated is quiet a little sooner than any inevitable need was. And subsequently commentators are put to the trouble of exposing "unsubstantiated traditions" and "calumnies of Griswold" and "Bacchic

myths" and "symbolic vines," in annotated editions for the use of classrooms. And the circumstance is, thus, decorously huddled out of sight that now and then mankind does in point of fact produce an economist.

§ 39

For to some of us this economy seems wrong. There is no flaw in it perhaps, as a matter of pure reason: but reasoning very often conducts one to undesirable results, and after all has no claim to be considered infallible. . . . Drugged by the fumes of moral indignation, we will even protest that, inasmuch as Professor Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was a man of irreproachable habits * * * *, it is, among other inferences, a self-evident proposition that Shakespeare did not die as the result of a drinking-bout. Conceivably the syllogism is not builded of perennial brass. But, as has been said, it seems at first sight, to every reputable connoisseur of art, that the only possible way to confront this unpleasant truth is to deny its existence. We somehow know, again led by instinctive wisdom, that it is more salutary for us to perceive in this mythos of the *Dive Bouteille,* which clings with annoying uniformity to so many great creative writers, simply a proof of their detractors' uninventiveness. . . . For we admire our corner of the planet, we prize our span of life, and we cherish our bodies with a certain tenderness. It is not the part of a well-balanced person, say we, to think of such "economy," nor to appraise a man's relative importance in human life, far less in the material universe, after any such high-flown and morbid fashion, so long as there is the daily paper with all the local news. So we take refuge in that dynamic illusion known as common-sense; and wax sagacious over state elections and the children's progress at school and the misdemeanors of the cook, and other trivialities which accident places so near the eye that they seem large: and we care not a button that all about us flows and gyrates unceasingly an endless and inconceivable jumble of rotatory blazing gas and frozen spheres and detonating comets, wherethrough spins Earth like a frail midge. And we decline, very emphatically, to consider the universe as a whole,—"to encounter Pan," as the old Greeks phrased it, who rumored that this thing sometimes befell a mortal, but asserted likewise that the man was afterward insane. They seem to have had the root of the matter.

Albion College Library

§ 40

Yet Pan is eternal and ubiquitous, whatever we might prefer to have him. . . . So perhaps the creative writer will continue forever to abuse and wreck that inadequate human body which is his sole medium of expression, in an endeavor to compel the thing to serve his desire. It may be, of course, that he also is sometimes led by instinctive wisdom, and achieves economy with no more forethought than bees devote to the blending of honey: even when the case stands thus, the fact is in no way altered that actually the creative writer, alone of mankind, does in a logical fashion attempt the unhuman virtue of economy. Whether consciously or no, he labors to perpetuate something of himself in the one sphere of which he is certain, and he strives, in the only way unbarred, to create against the last reach of futurity that which was not anywhere before he made it. He breaks his implements with ruthless usage; he ruins all that time will loan: meanwhile the work goes forward, with fair promise. Yet a little while, as he assuredly reflects, and there will be no call for moral indignation, since it will be his book alone that will endure. And considering that wondrous volume, the archbishops and aldermen and pedagogues and leading philanthropists of oncoming years will concede that it was the reputed wastrel who played the usurer with his loaned body, and thriftily extorted interest, while those contemporaries who listened to the siren voice of common-sense were passing in limousines toward oblivion. . . . So it is that the verbal artist and the "practical" person must always pity each other: and when it comes to deciding which is in reality the wastrel, there seems a great deal to be said for both sides.

Perhaps that is a moral of no large ethical value. But I am afraid there is nothing of the sort in the whole sorry business. Meanwhile you must remember that this cult of Art is very ancient, and began in days when goddesses were honored by human sacrifice. I think it is Thomas à Kempis who reports that an old custom is not lightly broken.

WHAT WE ASK OF LITERATURE

§ 97

MEANWHILE (continued John Charteris) it is strange to look out upon that quiet-colored place of vacant lawns and undulating foliage, where there appears to be no living thing anywhere save those querulous birds. Everywhere it is a world of wavering verdancy, a twilit world without any shadows or sharp fall of sun rays, a world such as we attribute to the merfolk undersea,—or, say, to the witch-woman's occupancy. It is only my familiar garden, but this trick of light estranges it. . . . At dawn you have the Chivalrous sense of being in a place that is not home, and wherein something is expected of you. Then, too, at dawn you have a sense of imminent destiny, and you feel that what is going to happen to you is very generally foreknown. Birds shrill of it, and it is about this the trees hold conference, and the placid sun seems to have risen to find how far the matter has progressed. Eh, I am helpless in an ambiguous place,—I and all my fellows, whom I may not, quite, understand,—and there is no escape from this unalterably ordered procession of sound and noise and color, save through death. And I do not know what death means, either. . . . So I shall presently eat breakfast and enjoy it, and look over the morning paper with interest, and then get to writing and find pleasure in that too,—I, who am under this inevitable sentence to a fate at which I cannot guess! It is in such a predicament that I find time to think seriously about literature, and to prattle about literature, and to ask this and that of literature, quite as if books or anything else could possibly matter, while that impends which is going to happen to me,—that unpredictable outcome of affairs which the dawn knows about. For, very certainly, at dawn there is abroad some force which foreknows all things. I feel its nearness and its contemplation of me, and I am frightened. . . .

§ 98

Meanwhile you voice a truth I had not hitherto perceived: I ask of literature those things of which I regret the lack in my own life. I appeal for charity; I implore that literature afford me what I cannot come by in myself. . . .

For I want distinction for that existence which ought to be peculiarly mine, among my innumerable fellows who swarm about earth like ants. Yet which one of us is noticeably, or can be appreciably, different, in this throng of human ephemeræ and all their millions and inestimable millions of millions of predecessors and oncoming progeny? And even though one mote may transiently appear exceptional, the distinction of those who in their heydays are "great" personages—much as the Emperor of Lilliput overtopped his subjects by the breadth of Captain Gulliver's nail,—must suffer loss with time, and must dwindle continuously, until at most the man's recorded name remains here and there in sundry pedants' libraries. There were how many dynasties of Pharaohs, each one of whom was absolute lord of the known world, and is to-day forgotten? Among the countless popes who one by one were adored as the regent of Heaven upon earth, how many persons can to-day distinguish? and does not time breed emperors and czars and presidents as plentiful as blackberries, and as little thought of when their season is out? For there is no perpetuity in human endeavor: we strut upon a quicksand: and all that any man may do for good or ill is presently forgotten, because it does not matter. I wail to a familiar tune, of course, in this lament for the evanescence of human grandeur and the perishable renown of kings. And, indeed, to the statement that imperial Cæsar is turned to clay and Mizraim now cures wounds, and that, in short, Queen Anne is dead, we may agree lightly enough; for it is, after all, a matter of no personal concern: but how hard it is to concede that the banker and the rector and the traffic-officer to whom we more immediately defer, and we ourselves, and the little gold heads of our children, may be of no importance, either! . . . In art it may so happen that the thing which a man makes endures to be misunderstood and gabbled over: yet it is not the man himself. We retain the *Iliad,* but oblivion has swallowed Homer so deep that

many question if he ever existed at all. . . . So we pass as a cloud of gnats, where I want to live and to be thought of, if only by myself, as a distinguishable entity. But such distinction is impossible in the long progress of suns, whereby in thought to separate the personality of any one man from all others that have lived, becomes a task to stagger Omniscience. . . .

I want my life, the only life of which I am assured, to have symmetry or, in default of that, at least to acquire some clarity. Surely, it is not asking very much to wish that my personal conduct be intelligible to me! Yet it is forbidden to know for what purpose this universe was intended, to what end it was set a-going, or why I am here, or even what I had preferably do while here. It vaguely seems to me that I am expected to perform an allotted task, but as to what it is I have no notion. . . . And indeed, what have I done hitherto, in the years behind me? There are some books to show as increment, as something which was not anywhere before I made it, and which even in bulk will replace my buried body, so that my life will be to mankind no loss materially. But the course of my life, when I look back, is as orderless as a trickle of water that is diverted and guided by every pebble and crevice and grass-root it encounters. I seem to have done nothing with premeditation, but rather, to have had things done to me. And for all the rest of my life, as I know now, I shall have to shave every morning in order to be ready for no more than this! . . . I have attempted to make the best of my material circumstances always; nor do I see to-day how any widely varying course could have been wiser or even feasible: but material things have nothing to do with that life which moves in me. Why, then, should they direct and heighten and provoke and curb every action of life? It is against the tyranny of matter I would rebel,—against life's absolute need of food, and books, and fire, and clothing, and flesh, to touch and to inhabit, lest life perish. . . . No, all that which I do here or refrain from doing lacks clarity, nor can I detect any symmetry anywhere, such as living would assuredly display, I think, if my progress were directed by any particular motive. . . . It is all a muddling through, somehow, without any recognizable goal in view, and there is no explanation of the scuffle tendered or anywhere procurable. It merely seems that to go on living has become with me a habit. . . .

And I want beauty in my life. I have seen beauty in a sunset and in the spring woods and in the eyes of divers women, but now these happy accidents of light and color no longer thrill me. And I want beauty in my life itself, rather than in such chances as befall my living. It seems to me that many actions of my life were beautiful, very long ago, when I was young in an evanished world of friendly girls, who were all more lovely than any girl is nowadays. For women now are merely more or less good-looking, and as I know, their looks when at their best have been painstakingly enhanced and edited. . . . But I would like this life which moves and yearns in me, to be able itself to attain to comeliness, though but in transitory performance. The life of a butterfly, for example, is just a graceful gesture: and yet, in that its loveliness is complete and perfectly rounded in itself, I envy this bright flicker through existence. And the nearest I can come to my ideal is punctiliously to pay my bills, be polite to my wife, and contribute to deserving charities: the program does not seem, somehow, quite adequate. There are my books, I know; and there is beauty "embalmed and treasured up" in many pages of my books, and in the books of other persons, too, which I may read at will: but this desire inborn in me is not to be satiated by making marks upon paper, nor by deciphering them. . . . In short, I am enamored of that flawless beauty of which all poets have perturbedly divined the existence somewhere, and which life as men know it simply does not afford nor anywhere foresee. . . .

And tenderness, too—but does that appear a mawkish thing to desiderate in life? Well, to my finding human beings do not like one another. Indeed, why should they, being rational creatures? All babies have a temporary lien on tenderness, of course: and therefrom children too receive a dwindling income, although on looking back, you will recollect that your childhood was upon the whole a lonesome and much put-upon period. But all grown persons ineffably distrust one another. . . . In courtship, I grant you, there is a passing aberration which often mimics tenderness, sometimes as the result of honest delusion, but more frequently as an ambuscade in the endless struggle between man and woman. Married people are not ever tender with each other, you will notice: if they are mutually civil it is much: and physical contacts apart,

their relation is that of a very moderate intimacy. My own wife, at all events, I find an unfailing mystery, a Sphinx whose secrets I assume to be not worth knowing: and, as I am mildly thankful to narrate, she knows very little about me, and evinces as to my affairs no morbid interest. That is not to assert that if I were ill she would not nurse me through any imaginable contagion, nor that if she were drowning I would not plunge in after her, whatever my delinquencies at swimming: what I mean is that, pending such high crises, we tolerate each other amicably, and never think of doing more. . . . And from our blood-kin we grow apart inevitably. Their lives and their interests are no longer the same as ours, and, when we meet, it is with conscious reservations and much manufactured talk. Besides, they know things about us which we resent. . . . And with the rest of my fellows, I find that convention orders all our dealings, even with children, and we do and say what seems more or less expected. And I know that we distrust one another all the while, and that we instinctively conceal or misrepresent our actual thoughts and emotions when there is no very apparent need. . . . Personally, I do not like human beings because I am not aware, upon the whole, of any generally distributed qualities which entitle them as a race to admiration and affection. But toward people in books—such as Mrs. Millamant, and Helen of Troy, and Bella Wilfer, and Mélusine, and Beatrix Esmond,—I may intelligently overflow with tenderness and caressing words, in part because they deserve it, and in part because I know they will not suspect me of being "queer" or of having ulterior motives. . . .

And I very often wish that I could know the truth about just any one circumstance connected with my life. . . . Is the phantasmagoria of sound and noise and color really passing or is it all an illusion here in my brain? How do you know, for instance, that you are not dreaming me? In your conceded dreams, I am sure, you must invent and see and listen to persons who for the while seem quite as real to you as I do now. As I do, you observe, I say! and what thing is it to which I so glibly refer as I? If you will try to form a notion of yourself, of the sort of a something that you suspect to inhabit and partially to control your flesh-and-blood body, you will encounter a walking bundle of superfluities:

and when you mentally have put aside the extraneous things,—your garments and your members and your body, and your acquired habits and your appetites and your inherited traits and your prejudices, and all other appurtenances which considered separately you recognized to be no integral part of you,—why, then, there seems to remain, in those pearl-colored brain-cells, wherein is your ultimate one lair, not much beyond a faculty for receiving sensations, of which you know the larger portion to be illusory. Surely, to be just a very gullible consciousness provisionally existing among inexplicable mysteries, is not an enviable plight. And yet this life—to which I cling tenaciously,—comes to no more. Meanwhile I hear men talk about "the truth"; and they even wager handsome sums upon their knowledge of it: but I align myself with "jesting Pilate," and echo the forlorn query that recorded time has left unanswered. . . .

Then, last of all, I desiderate urbanity. I believe this is the rarest quality in the world. Indeed, it probably does not exist anywhere. A really urbane person—a mortal open-minded and affable to conviction of his own shortcomings and errors, and unguided in anything by irrational blind prejudicies,—could not but in a world of men and women be regarded as a monster. We are all of us, as if by instinct, intolerant of that which is unfamiliar: we resent its impudence: and very much the same principle which prompts small boys to jeer at a straw-hat out of season induces their elders to send missionaries to the heathen. The history of the progress of the human race is but the picaresque romance of intolerance, a narrative of how—what is it Milton says?—"truth never came into the world but, like a bastard, to the ignominy of him that brought her forth, till time hath washed and salted the infant, declared her legitimate, and churched the father of his young Minerva." And I, who prattle to you, very candidly confess that I have no patience with other people's ideas unless they coincide with mine: for if the fellow be demonstrably wrong I am fretted by his stupidity, and if his notion seem more nearly right than mine I am infuriated. . . . Yet I wish I could acquire urbanity, very much as I would like to have wings. For in default of it, I cannot manage to be civil to that piteous thing called human nature, or even to view its parasites, whether they be politicians or clergymen or

popular authors, with one half the commiseration which the shifts they are put to, quite certainly, would rouse in the urbane. . . .

Yes: I am fretted every day by my life's want of distinction and clarity, and beauty and symmetry, and tenderness and truth and urbanity.

§ 99

So I in point of fact desire of literature, just as you guessed, precisely those things of which I most poignantly and most constantly regret the lack in my own life. And it is that which romance affords her postulants. The philtres of romance are brewed to free us from this unsatisfying life that is calendared by fiscal years, and to contrive a less disastrous elusion of our own personalities than many seek dispersedly in drink and drugs and lust and fanaticism, and sometimes in death. For, beset by his own rationality, the normal man is goaded to evade the strictures of his normal life, upon the incontestable ground that it is a stupid and unlovely routine; and to escape likewise from his own personality, which bores him quite as much as it does his associates. So he hurtles into these very various roads from reality, precisely as a goaded sheep flees without notice of what lies ahead. . . .

And romance tricks him, but not to his harm. For, be it remembered that man alone of animals plays the ape to his dreams. Romance it is undoubtedly who whispers to every man that life is not a blind and aimless business, not all a hopeless waste and confusion; and that his existence is a pageant (appreciatively observed by divine spectators), and that he is strong and excellent and wise: and to romance he listens, willing and thrice willing to be cheated by the honeyed fiction. The things of which romance assures him are very far from true: yet it is solely by believing himself a creature but little lower than the cherubim that man has by interminable small degrees become, upon the whole, distinctly superior to the champanzee. Howsoever extravagant may seem these flattering whispers to-day, they were immeasurably more remote from veracity when men first began to listen to their sugared susurrus; and steadily the discrepancy lessens. To-day these things seem quite as preposterous to calm consideration as did flying yesterday: and so, to the Gradgrindians, romance appears to discourse foolishly, and incurs the common fate of prophets: for it is about to-morrow and about the

day after to-morrow, that romance is talking, by means of parables. And, all the while, man plays the ape to fairer and yet fairer dreams, and practise strengthens him at mimickry. . . .

§ 100

To what does the whole business tend?—why, how in heaven's name should I know? We can but be content to note that all goes forward, toward something. . . . It may be that we are nocturnal creatures perturbed by rumors of a dawn which comes inevitably, as prologue to a day wherein we and our children have no part whatever. It may be that when our arboreal propositus descended from his palm-tree and began to walk upright about the earth, his progeny were forthwith committed to a journey in which to-day is only a way-station. Yet I prefer to take it that we are components of an unfinished world, and that we are but as seething atoms which ferment toward its making, if merely because man as he now exists can hardly be the finished product of any Creator whom one could very heartily revere. We are being made into something quite unpredictable, I imagine: and we are sustained, through the purging and the smelting, by an instinctive knowledge that we are being made into something better. For this we know, quite incommunicably, and yet as surely as we know that we will to have it thus.

And it is this will that stirs in us to have the creatures of earth and the affairs of earth, not as they are, but "as they ought to be," which we call romance. But when we note how visibly it sways all life we perceive that we are talking about God.

FROM

Figures of Earth

WHAT HELMAS DIRECTED

THEY DUEL ON MORVEN

BANDAGES FOR THE VICTOR

THE TROUBLING WINDOW

EXCURSIONS FROM CONTENT

THE PASSING OF MANUEL

In Figures of Earth *we follow the personal biography of Dom Manuel with whose long line of spiritual children the total Biography is concerned. The swineherd, who rises from the mire to become a great lord of creation, is something of a creator himself, as later he becomes a sort of Redeemer. For from the mud he fashions semblances of human shapes. But he is an unhandy sculptor, whose forms of clay lack symmetry, and he cannot animate them with breath and movement. How the secret of inspiring mud images was almost communicated to him and how a goddess became a woman is told in the first three chapters here selected from Part II. The second three chapters in our selection are from the concluding Part V. The mysterious window, as Mr. Cabell explicitly assures us and as the narrative itself clearly maintains, is the goal toward which the whole book leads. This tricky casement is an interplay between the values of what is seen on this side of the glass and what is found beyond. Are all our possessions, fought for, won, and prized, but figments on glass? And what lies outside, through the open window? And how do we come, at the end of so many adventures, to be in this room, with a thoroughly domestic wife and a lively playful child, whom, after all, we are ready to leave? And why just before his passing (in a chapter not given here) does Manuel kill Queen Suskind, who was not human but knew the truth? These questions are not finally answered (finality would be a dubious or superfluous virtue in a Cabellian mystery), but they are led up to in the whole book, which in turn leads up to the long series of dramas enacted by Manuel's descendants through many centuries.*

J. M.

WHAT HELMAS DIRECTED

Now the Count of Poictesme departs from Provence, with his lackeys carrying his images, and early in April he comes to Helmas the Deep-Minded. The wise King was then playing with his small daughter Mélusine (who later dethroned and imprisoned him), but he sent the child away with a kiss, and he attentively heard Dom Manuel through.

King Helmas looked at the images, prodded them with a shriveled forefinger, and cleared his throat; and then said nothing, because, after all, Dom Manuel was Count of Poictesme.

"What is needed?" said Manuel.

"They are not true to life," replied Helmas—"particularly this one which has the look of me."

"Yes, I know that: but who can give life to my images?"

King Helmas pushed back his second best crown, wherein was set the feather from the wing of the miller's goose, and he scratched his forehead. He said, "There is a power over all figures of earth and a queen whose will is neither to loose nor to bind." Helmas turned toward a thick book, wherein was magic. "Yes, *queen* is the same as *cwen*. Therefore Queen Freydis of Audela might help you."

"Yes, for it is she that owns Schamir. But the falcons are not nesting now, and how can I go to Freydis, that woman of strange deeds?"

"Oh, people nowadays no longer use falcons; and of course nobody can go to Freydis uninvited. Still, it can be managed that Freydis will come to you when the moon is void and powerless, and when this and that has been arranged."

Thereafter Helmas the Deep-Minded told Count Manuel what was requisite. "So you will need such and such things," says King Helmas, "but, above all, do not forget the ointment."

Count Manuel went alone into Poictesme, which was his fief if only he could get it. He came secretly to Upper Morven, that place of horrible fame. Near the ten-colored stone, whereon men had sacrificed to Vel-Tyno in time's youth, he builded an enclosure of peeled willow wands, and spread butter upon them, and tied them with knots of yellow ribbons, as Helmas had directed. Manuel arranged all matters within the enclosure as Helmas had directed. There Manuel waited, on the last night in April, regarding the full moon.

In a while you saw the shadowings on the moon's radiancy begin to waver and move: later they passed from the moon's face like little clouds, and the moon was naked of markings. This was a token that the Moon-Children had gone to the well from which once a month they fetch water, and that for an hour the moon would be void and powerless. With this and that ceremony Count Manuel kindled such a fire upon the old altar of Vel-Tyno as Helmas had directed.

Manuel cried aloud: "Now be propitious, infernal, terrestrial and celestial Bombo! Lady of highways, patroness of crossroads, thou who bearest the light! Thou who dost labor always in obscurity, thou enemy of the day, thou friend and companion of darkness! Thou rejoicing in the barking of dogs and in shed blood, thus do I honor thee."

Manuel did as Helmas had directed, and for an instant the screamings were pitiable, but the fire ended these speedily.

Then Manuel cried, again: "O thou who wanderest amid shadows and over tombs, and dost tether even the strong sea! O whimsical sister of the blighting sun, and fickle mistress of old death! O Gorgo, Mormo, lady of a thousand forms and qualities! now view with a propitious eye my sacrifice!"

Thus Manuel spoke, and steadily the fire upon the altar grew larger and brighter as he nourished it repugnantly.

When the fire was the height of a warrior, and queer things were happening to this side and to that side, Count Manuel spoke the ordered words: and of a sudden the flames' colors were altered, so that green shimmerings showed in the fire, as though salt were burning there. Manuel waited. This greenness shifted and writhed and increased in the heart of the fire, and out of the fire oozed a

green serpent, the body of which was well-nigh as thick as a man's body.

This portent came toward Count Manuel horribly. He, who was familiar with serpents, now grasped this monster's throat, and to the touch its scales were like very cold glass.

The great snake shifted so resistlessly that Manuel was forced back toward the fire and toward a doom more dreadful than burning: and the firelight was in the snake's contemptuous wise eyes. Manuel was of stalwart person, but his strength availed him nothing until he began to recite aloud, as Helmas had directed, the multiplication tables: Freydis could not withstand mathematics.

So when Manuel had come to two times eleven the tall fire guttered as though it bended under the passing of a strong wind: then the flames burned high, and Manuel could see that he was grasping the throat of a monstrous pig. He, who was familiar with pigs, could see that this was a black pig, caked with dried curds of the Milky Way; its flesh was chill to the touch, like dead flesh; and it had long tusks, which possessed life of their own, and groped and writhed toward Manuel like fat white worms.

Then Manuel said, as Helmas had directed: "Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and a hundred sheep, beside harts, and roebucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl. But Elijah the Tishbite was fed by ravens that brought him bread and flesh."

Again the tall flames guttered. Now Manuel was grasping a thick heatless slab of crystal, like a mirror, wherein he could see himself quite clearly. Just as he really was, he, who was not familiar with such mirrors, could see Count Manuel, housed in a little wet dirt with old inveterate stars adrift about him everywhither; and the spectacle was enough to frighten anybody.

So Manuel said: "The elephant is the largest of all animals, and in intelligence approaches the nearest to man. Its nostril is elongated, and answers to the purpose of a hand. Its toes are undivided, and it lives two hundred years. Africa breeds elephants, but India produces the largest."

The mirror now had melted into a dark warm fluid which oozed between his fingers, dripping to the ground. But Manuel held

tightly to what remained between his palms, and he felt, they say, that in the fluid was struggling something small and soft and living, as though he held a tiny minnow.

Said Manuel, "A straight line is the shortest distance between two points."

Of a sudden the fire became an ordinary fire, and the witches of Amneran screamed, and Morven was emptied of sorcery, and Count Manuel was grasping the warm soft throat of a woman. Instantly he had her within the enclosure of peeled willow wands that had been spread with butter and tied with knots of yellow ribbon, because into such an enclosure the power and the dominion of Freydis could never enter.

All these things Manuel did precisely as King Helmas had directed.

THEY DUEL ON MORVEN

So by the light of the seven candles Dom Manuel first saw Queen Freydis in her own shape, and in the appearance which she wore in her own country. What Manuel thought there was never any telling: but every other man who saw Queen Freydis in this appearance declared that instantly all his past life became a drugged prelude to the moment wherein he stood face to face with Freydis, the high Queen of Audela.

Freydis showed now as the most lovely of womankind. She had black plaited hair, and folds of crimson silk were over her white flesh, and over her shoulders was a black cloak embroidered with little gold stars and ink-horns, and she wore sandals of gilded bronze. But in her face was such loveliness as may not be told.

Now Freydis went from one side of the place to the other side, and saw the magics that protected the enclosure. "Certainly, you have me fast," the high Queen said. "What is it you want of me?"

Manuel showed her the three images which he had made, set there arow. "I need your aid with these."

Queen Freydis looked at them, and Freydis smiled. "These frozen abortions are painstakingly made. What more can anybody demand?"

Dom Manuel told her that he desired to make an animated and lively figure.

Whereupon she laughed, merrily and sweetly and scornfully, and replied that never would she give such aid.

"Very well, then," said Manuel, "I have ready the means to compel you." He showed this lovely woman the instruments of her torture. His handsome young face was very grave, as though already his heart were troubled. He thrust her hand into the cruel vise which was prepared. "Now, sorceress, whom all men dread save me, you shall tell me the Tuyla incantation as the reward of

my endeavors, or else a little by a little I shall destroy the hand that has wrought so many mischiefs."

Freydis in the light of the seven candles showed pale as milk. She said: "I am frail and human in this place, and have no power beyond the power of every woman, and no strength at all. Nevertheless, I will tell you nothing."

Manuel set his hand to the lever, ready to loose destruction. "To tell me what I desire you to tell me will do you no hurt—"

"No," replied Freydis: "but I am not going to take orders from you or any man breathing."

"—And for defying me you will suffer very terribly—"

"Yes," replied Freydis. "And much you will care!" she said, reproachfully.

"—Therefore I think that you are acting foolishly."

Freydis said: "You make a human woman of me, and then expect me to act upon reason. It is you who are behaving foolishly."

Count Manuel meditated, for this beyond doubt sounded sensible. From the look of his handsome young face, his heart was now exceedingly troubled. Queen Freydis breathed more freely, and began to smile, with the wisdom of women, which is not superhuman, but is ruthless.

"The hand would be quite ruined, too," said Manuel, looking at it more carefully. Upon the middle finger was a copper ring, in which was set a largish black stone: this was Schamir. But Manuel looked only at the hand.

He touched it. "Your hand, Queen Freydis, whatever mischief it may have executed, is soft as velvet. It is colored like rose-petals, but it smells more sweet than they. No, certainly, my images are not worth the ruining of such a hand."

Then Manuel released her, sighing. "My geas must stay upon me, and my images must wait," says Manuel.

"Why, do you really like my hands?" asked Freydis, regarding them critically.

Manuel said: "Ah, fair sweet enemy, do not mock at me! All is in readiness to compel you to do my will. Had you preserved some ugly shape I would have conquered you. But against the shape which you now wear I cannot contend. Dragons and warlocks and chimæras and such nameless monsters as I perceive to

be crowding about this enclosure of buttered willow wands I do not fear at all, but I cannot fight against the appearance which you now wear."

"Why, do you really like my natural appearance?" Freydis said, incredibly surprised. "It is a comfort, of course, to slip into it occasionally, but I had never really thought much about it one way or the other—"

She went to the great mirror which had been set ready as Helmas directed. "I never liked my hair in these severe big plaits, either. As for those monsters yonder, they are my people who are coming out of the fire to rescue me, in some of the forgotten shapes, as spoorns and trows and calcars, and other terrors of antiquity. But they cannot get into this enclosure of buttered willow wands, poor dears, on account of your magickings. How foolish they look —do they not?—leering and capering and gnashing their teeth, with no superstitious persons anywhere to pay attention to them."

The Queen paused: she coughed delicately. "But you were talking some nonsense or other about my natural appearance not being bad looking. Now most men prefer blondes, and, besides, you are not really listening to me, and that is not polite."

"It is so difficult to talk collectedly," said Manuel, "with your appalling servitors leering and capering and gnashing double sets of teeth all over Upper Morven—"

She saw the justice of this. She went now to that doorway through which, unless a man lifted her over the threshold, she might not pass, on account of the tonthecs and the spaks and the horseshoes.

She cried, in a high sweet voice: "A penny, a penny, twopence, a penny and a half, and a half penny! Now do you go away, all of you, for the wisdom of Helmas is too strong for us. There is no way for you to get into, nor for me to get out of, this place of buttered willow wands, until I have deluded and circumvented this pestiferous, squinting young mortal. Go down into Bellegarde and spill the blood of Northmen, or raise a hailstorm, or amuse yourselves in one way or another way. Anyhow, do you take no thought for me, who am for the while a human woman: for my adversary is a mortal man, and in that duel never yet has the man conquered."

She turned to Manuel. She said:

"The land of Audela is my kingdom. But you embraced my penalties, you have made a human woman of me. So do I tread with wraiths, for my lost realm alone is real. Here all is but a restless contention of shadows which pass presently; here all that is visible and all the colors known to men are shadows dimming the true colors; here time and death, the darkest shadows known to men, delude you with false seemings: for all such things as men hold incontestable, because they are apparent to sight and sense, are a weariful drifting of fogs that veil the world which is no longer mine. So in this twilit world of yours do we of Audela appear to be but men and women."

"I would that such women appeared more often," said Manuel.

"The land of Audela is my kingdom, where I am Queen of all that lies behind this veil of human sight and sense. This veil may not ever be lifted; but very often the veil is pierced, and noting the broken place, men call it fire. Through these torn places men may glimpse the world that is real: and this glimpse dazzles their dimmed eyes and weakling forces, and this glimpse mocks at their lean might. Through these rent places, when the opening is made large enough, a few men here and there, not quite so witless as their fellows, know how to summon us of Audela when for an hour the moon is void and powerless: we come for an old reason: and we come as men and women."

"Ah, but you do not speak with the voices of men and women," Manuel replied, "for your voice is music."

"The land of Audela is my kingdom, and very often, just for the sport's sake, do I and my servitors go secretly among you. As human beings we blunder about your darkened shadow world, bound by the laws of sight and sense, but keeping always in our hearts the secrets of Audela and the secret of our manner of returning thither. Sometimes, too, for the sport's sake, we imprison in earthen figures a spark of the true life of Audela: and then you little persons, that have no authentic life, but only the flickering of a vexed shadow to sustain you in brief fretfulness, say it is very pretty; and you negligently applaud us as the most trivial of men and women."

"No; we applaud you as the most beautiful," says Manuel.

"Come now, Count Manuel, and do you have done with your

silly flatterings, which will never wheedle anything out of me! So you have trapped Queen Freydis in mortal flesh. Therefore I must abide in the body of a human woman, and be subject to your whims, and to your beautiful big muscles, you think, until I lend a spark of Audela's true life to your ridiculous images. But I will show you better, for I will never give in to you nor to any man breathing."

In silence Count Manuel regarded the delightful shaping and the clear burning colors of this woman's face. He said, as if in sadness: "The images no longer matter. It is better to leave them as they are."

"That is very foolish talk," Queen Freydis answered, promptly, "for they need my aid if ever any images did. Not that, however, I intend to touch them."

"Indeed, I forbid you to touch them, fair enemy. For were the images made as animated and lively as I wish them to be, I would be looking at them always, and not caring for any woman: and no woman anywhere would have the power to move me as your beauty moves me now, and I would not be valuing you the worth of an old onion."

"That is not the truth," says Freydis, angrily, "for the man who is satisfied with the figure he has made is as great a fool about women as any other man. And who are you to be forbidding me anything?"

"I would have you remember," said Manuel, very masterfully, "that they are my images, to do with as I wish. Also I would have you remember that, whatever you may pretend to be in Audela, here I am stronger than you."

Now the proud woman laughed. Defiantly she touched the nearest image, with formal ancient gestures, and you could see the black stone Schamir taking on the colors of an opal. Under her touch the clay image which had the look of Alianora shivered, and drew sobbing breath. The image rose, a living creature that was far more beautiful than human kind, and it regarded Manuel scornfully. Then it passed limping from the enclosure: and Manuel sighed.

"That is a strong magic," said Manuel: "and this is almost exactly the admirable and significant figure that I desired to make in the

world. But, as I now perceive too late, I fashioned the legs of this figure unevenly, and the joy I have in its life is less than the shame that I take from its limping."

"Such magic is a trifle," Freydis replied, "although it is the only magic I can perform in an enclosure of buttered willow wands. Now, then, you see for yourself that I am not going to take orders from you. So the figure you have made, will you or nil you, must limp about in all men's sight, for not more than a few centuries, to be sure, but long enough to prove that I am not going to be dictated to."

"I do not greatly care, O fairest and most shrewd of enemies. A half-hour since, it seemed to me an important matter to wrest from you this secret of giving life to images. Now I have seen the miracle; I know that for the man who has your favor it is possible to become as a god, creating life, and creating lovelier living beings than any god creates, and beings which live longer, too: and even so, it is not of these things that I am really thinking, but only of your eyes."

"Why, do you like my eyes!" says Freydis,—"you, who if once you could make living images would never be caring about any woman any more?"

But Manuel told her wherein her eyes were different from the eyes of any other person, and more dangerous; and she listened, willingly enough, for Freydis was now a human woman. Thereafter it appeared that a grieving and a great trouble of mind had come upon Manuel because of the loveliness of Freydis, for he made this complaint:

"There is much loss in the world, where men war ceaselessly with sorrow, and time like a strong thief strips all men of all they prize. Yet when the emperor is beaten in battle and his broad lands are lost, he, shrugging, says, 'In the next battle I may conquer.' And when the bearded merchant's ship is lost at sea, he says, 'The next voyage, belike, will be prosperous.' Even when the life of an old beggar departs from him in a ditch, he says, 'I trust to be to-morrow a glad young seraph in paradise.' Thus hope serves as a cordial for every hurt: but for him who has beheld the loveliness of Freydis there is no hope at all.

"For, in comparison with that alien clear beauty, there is no

beauty in this world. He that has beheld the loveliness of Freydis must go henceforward as a hungry person, because of troubling memories: and his fellows deride him enviously. All the world is fretted by his folly, knowing that his faith in the world's might is no longer firm-set, and that he aspires to what is beyond the world's giving. In his heart he belittles the strong stupid lords of earth; and they, being strong, plan vengeance, the while that in a corner he makes images to commemorate what is lost: and so for him who has beheld the loveliness of Freydis there is no hope at all.

"He that has willed to look upon Queen Freydis does not dread to consort with serpents nor with swine; he faces the mirror wherein a man beholds himself without self-deceiving; he views the blood that drips from his soiled hands, and knows that this, too, was needed: yet these endurings purchase but one hour. The hour passes, and therewith passes also Freydis, the high Queen. Only the memory of her hour remains, like a cruel gadfly, for which the crazed beholder of Queen Freydis must build a lodging in his images, madly endeavoring to commingle memories with wet mud: and so for him who has beheld the loveliness of Freydis there is no hope at all."

Freydis heard him through, considerately. "But I wonder to how many other women you have talked such nonsense about beauty and despair and eternity," said Freydis, "and they very probably liking to hear it, the poor fools! And I wonder how you can expect me to believe you, when you pretend to think me all these fine things, and still keep me penned in this enclosure like an old vicious cow."

"No, that is not the way it is any longer. For now the figure that I have made in the world, and all else that is in the world, and all that is anywhere without this enclosure of buttered willow wands, mean nothing to me, and there is no meaning in anything save in the loveliness of Freydis."

Dom Manuel went to the door of the enclosure, then to the windows, sweeping away the gilded tonthecs and the shining spaks, and removing from the copper nails the horseshoes that had been cast by Mohammed's mare and Hrimfaxi and Balaam's ass and Pegasus. "You were within my power. Now I destroy that power,

and therewith myself. Now is the place unguarded, and all your servitors are free to enter, and all your terrors are untrammeled, to be loosed against me, who have no longer anything to dread. For I love you with such mortal love as values nothing else beside its desire, and you care nothing for me."

After a little while of looking she sighed, and said uneasily: "It is the foolish deed of a true lover. And, really, I do like you, rather. But, Manuel, I do not know what to do next! Never at any time has this thing happened before, so that all my garnered wisdom is of no use whatever. Nobody anywhere has ever dared to snap his fingers at the fell power of Freydis as you are doing, far less has anybody ever dared to be making eyes at her. Besides, I do not wish to consume you with lightnings, and to smite you with insanity appears so unnecessary."

"I love you," Manuel said, "and your heart is hard, and your beauty is beyond the thinking of man, and your will is neither to loose nor to bind. In a predicament so unexampled, how can it at all matter to me whatever you may elect to do?"

"Then certainly I shall not waste any of my fine terrors on you!" said Freydis, with a vexed tossing of her head. "Nor have I any more time to waste upon you either, for presently the Moon-Children will be coming back to their places: and before the hour is out wherein the moon stays void and powerless I must return to my own kingdom, whither you may not follow, to provoke me with any more of your nonsense. And then you will be properly sorry, I dare say, for you will be remembering me always, and there will be only human women to divert you, and they are poor creatures."

Freydis went again to the mirror, and she meditated there. "Yes, you will be remembering me with my hair in these awful plaits, and that is a pity, but still you will remember me always. And when you make images they will be images of me. No, but I cannot have you making any more outrageous parodies like astonished corpses, and people everywhere laughing at Queen Freydis!"

She took up the magical pen, laid ready as Helmas had directed, and she wrote with this gryphon's feather. "So here is the recipe for the Tuyla incantation with which to give life to your images. It may comfort you a little to perform that silly magic. It, anyhow,

will prevent such good-for-nothing minxes as may have no more intelligence than to take you seriously, from putting on too many airs and graces around the images which you will make of me with my hair done so very unbecomingly."

"Nothing can ever comfort me, fair enemy, when you have gone away," said Manuel.

But he took the parchment.

BANDAGES FOR THE VICTOR

They came out of the enclosure, to the old altar of Vel-Tyno, while the moon was still void and powerless. The servitors of Freydis were thronging swiftly toward Upper Morven, after a pleasant hour of ravening and ramping about Poictesme. As spoorns and trows and calcars and as other long forgotten shapes they came, without any noise, so that Upper Morven was like the disordered mind of a wretch that is dying in fever: and to this side and to that side the witches of Amneran sat nodding in approval of what they saw.

Thus, one by one, the forgotten shapes came to the fire, and cried, "A penny, a penny, twopence, a penny and a half, and a halfpenny!" as each entered into the fire which was the gateway to their home.

"Farewell!" said Freydis: and as she spoke she sighed.

"Not thus must be our parting," Manuel says. "For do you listen now, Queen Freydis! it was Helmas the Deep-Minded who told me what was requisite. '*Queen* is the same as *cwen,* which means *a woman,* no more nor less,' said the wise King. 'You have but to remember that.'"

She took his meaning. Freydis cried out, angrily: "Then all the foolishness you have been talking about my looks and your love for me was pre-arranged! And you have cheated me out of the old Tuyla mystery by putting on the appearance of loving me, and by pestering me with such nonsense as a plowman trades against the heart of a milkmaid! Now, certainly, I shall reward your candor in a fashion that will be whispered about for a long while."

With that, Queen Freydis set about a devastating magic.

"All, all was pre-arranged save one thing," said Manuel, with a yapping laugh, and not even looking at the commencing terrors. He thrust into the fire the parchment which Freydis had given

him. "Yes, all was pre-arranged except that Helmas did not purge me of that which will not accept the hire of any lying to you. So the Deep-Minded's wisdom comes, at the last pinch, to naught."

Now Freydis for an instant waved back two-thirds of an appalling monster, which was as yet incompletely evoked for Dom Manuel's destruction, and Freydis cried impatiently, "But have you no sense whatever! for you are burning your hand."

And indeed the boy had already withdrawn his hand with a grimace, for in the ardor of executing his noble gesture, as Queen Freydis saw, he had not estimated how hot her fires were.

"It is but a little hurt to me who have taken a great hurt," says Manuel, sullenly. "For I had thought to lie, and in my mouth the lie turned to a truth. At least, I do not profit by my false-dealing, and I wave you farewell with empty hands burned clean of theft."

Then she who was a human woman said, "But you have burned your hand!"

"It does not matter: I have ointments yonder. Make haste, Queen Freydis, for the hour passes wherein the moon is void and powerless."

"There is time." She brought out water from the enclosure, and swiftly bathed Dom Manuel's hand.

From the fire now came a whispering, "Make haste, Queen Freydis! make haste, dear Fairy mistress!"

"There is time," said Freydis, "and do you stop flurrying me!" She brought from the enclosure a pot of ointment, and she dressed Manuel's hand.

"Borram, borram, Leanhaun shee!" the fire crackled. "Now the hour ends."

Then Freydis sprang from Manuel, toward the flames beyond which she was queen of ancient mysteries, and beyond which her will was neither to loose nor to bind. And she cried hastily, "A penny, a penny, twopence—"

But just for a moment she looked back at Morven, and at the man who waited upon Morven alone and hurt. In his firelit eyes she saw love out of measure and without hope. And in the breast of Freydis moved the heart of a human woman.

"I cannot help it," she said, as the hour passed. "Somebody has to bandage it, and men have no sense in these matters."

Whereon the fire roared angrily, and leaped, and fell dead, for the Moon-Children Bil and Hjuki had returned from the well which is called Byrgir, and the moon was no longer void and powerless.

"So, does that feel more comfortable?" said Freydis. She knew that within this moment age and sorrow and death had somewhere laid inevitable ambuscades from which to assail her by and by, for she was mortal after the sacred fire's extinction, and she meant to make the best of it.

For a while Count Manuel did not speak. Then he said, in a shaking voice: "O woman dear and lovely and credulous and compassionate, it is you and you alone that I must be loving eternally with such tenderness as is denied to proud and lonely queens on their tall thrones! And it is you that I must be serving always with such a love as may not be given to the figure that any man makes in this world! And though all life may be a dusty waste of endless striving, and though the ways of men may always be the ways of folly, yet are these ways our ways henceforward, and not hopeless ways, for you and I will tread them together."

"Now certainly there is in Audela no such moonstruck nonsense to be hearing, nor any such quick-footed hour of foolishness to be living through," Freydis replied, "as here to-night has robbed me of my kingdom."

"Love will repay," said Manuel, as is the easy fashion of men.

And Freydis, a human woman now in all things, laughed low and softly in the darkness. "Repay me thus, my dearest: no matter how much I may coax you in the doubtful time to come, do you not ever tell me how you happened to have the bandages and the pot of ointment set ready by the mirror. For it is bad for a human woman ever to be seeing through the devices of wise kings, and far worse for her to be seeing through the heroic antics of her husband." * * * *

In the darkness of Upper Morven they had happiness, no matter for how brief a while.

THE TROUBLING WINDOW

It seemed, in a word, that trouble had forgotten Count Manuel. None the less, Dom Manuel opened a window, at his fine home at Storisende, on a fine, sunlit, warmish morning (for this was the last day of April) to confront an outlook more perturbing than his hard vivid eyes had yet lighted on.

So he regarded it for a while. Considerately Dom Manuel now made experiments with three windows in this Room of Ageus, and found how, in so far as one's senses could be trusted, the matter stood. Thereafter, as became an intelligent person, he went back to his writing-table, and set about signing the requisitions and warrants and other papers which Ruric the clerk had left there.

Yet all the while Dom Manuel's gaze kept lifting to the windows. There were three of them, set side by side, each facing south. They were of thick clear glass, of a sort whose manufacture is a lost art, for these windows had been among the spoils brought back by Duke Asmund from nefarious raidings of Philistia, in which country these windows had once been a part of the temple of Ageus, an immemorial god of the Philistines. For this reason the room was called the Room of Ageus.

Through these windows Count Manuel could see familiar fields, the long avenue of poplars and the rising hills beyond. All was as it had been yesterday, and as all had been since, nearly three years ago, Count Manuel first entered Storisende. All was precisely as it had been, except, to be sure, that until yesterday Dom Manuel's table had stood by the farthest window. He could not remember that until to-day this window had ever been opened, because since his youth had gone out of him Count Manuel was becoming more and more susceptible to draughts.

"It is certainly very curious," Dom Manuel said, aloud, when he had finished with his papers.

He was again approaching the very curious window when his daughter Melicent, now nearly three years old, came noisily, and in an appallingly soiled condition, to molest him. She had bright beauty later, but at three she was one of those children whom human powers cannot keep clean for longer than three minutes.

Dom Manuel kept for her especial delectation a small flat paddle on his writing-table, and this he now caught up.

"Out of the room with you, little pest!" he blustered, "for I am busy."

So the child, as was her custom, ran back into the hallway, and stood there, no longer in the room, but with one small foot thrust beyond the doorsill, while she laughed up at her big father, and derisively stuck out a tiny curved red tongue at the famed overlord of Poictesme. Then Dom Manuel, as was his custom, got down upon the floor to slap with his paddle at the intruding foot, and Melicent squealed with delight, and pulled back her foot in time to dodge the paddle, and thrust out her other foot beyond the sill, and tried to withdraw that too before it was spanked.

So it was they gave over a quarter of an hour to rioting, and so it was that grave young Ruric found them. Count Manuel rather sheepishly arose from the floor, and dusted himself, and sent Melicent into the buttery for some sugar cakes. He told Ruric what were the most favorable terms he could offer the burgesses of Narenta, and he gave Ruric the signed requisitions.

Presently, when Ruric had gone Dom Manuel went again to the farthest window, opened it, and looked out once more. He shook his head, as one who gives up a riddle. He armed himself, and rode over to Perdigon, whither sainted King Ferdinand had come to consult with Manuel about contriving the assassination of the Moorish general, Al-Motawakkil. This matter Dom Manuel deputed to Guivric the Sage; and so was rid of it.

In addition, Count Manuel had on hand that afternoon an appeal to the judgment of God, over some rather valuable farming lands; but it was remarked by the spectators that he botched the unhorsing and severe wounding of Earl Ladinas, and conducted it rather as though Dom Manuel's heart were not in the day's business. Indeed, he had reason, for while supernal mysteries were well enough if one were still a hare-brained lad, or even if one

set out in due form to seek them, to find such mysteries obtruding themselves unsought into the home-life of a well-thought-of nobleman was discomposing, and to have the windows of his own house playing tricks on him seemed hardly respectable.

All that month, too, some memory appeared to trouble Dom Manuel, in the back of his mind, while the lords of the Silver Stallion were busied in the pursuit of Othmar and Othmar's brigands in the Taunenfels: and as soon as Dom Manuel had captured and hanged the last squad of these knaves, Dom Manuel rode home and looked out of the window, to find matters unchanged.

Dom Manuel meditated. He sounded the gong for Ruric. Dom Manuel talked with the clerk about this and that. Presently Dom Manuel said: "But one stifles here. Open that window."

The clerk obeyed. Manuel at the writing-table watched him intently. But in opening the window the clerk had of necessity stood with his back toward Count Manuel, and when Ruric turned, the dark young face of Ruric was impassive.

Dom Manuel, playing with the jeweled chain of office about his neck, considered Ruric's face. Then Manuel said: "That is all. You may go."

But Count Manuel's face was troubled, and for the rest of this day he kept an eye on Ruric the young clerk. In the afternoon it was noticeable that this Ruric went often, on one pretext and another, into the Room of Ageus when nobody else was there. The next afternoon, in broad daylight, Manuel detected Ruric carrying into the Room of Ageus, of all things, a lantern. The Count waited a while, then went into the room through its one door. The room was empty. Count Manuel sat down and drummed with his fingers upon the top of his writing-table.

After a while the third window was opened. Ruric the clerk climbed over the sill. He blew out his lantern.

"You are braver than I," Count Manuel said, "it may be. It is certain you are younger. Once, Ruric, I would not have lured any dark and prim-voiced young fellow into attempting this adventure, but would have essayed it myself post-haste. Well, but I have other duties now, and appearances to keep up: and people would talk if they saw a well-thought-of nobleman well settled in life climb-

ing out of his own windows, and there is simply no telling what my wife would think of it."

The clerk had turned, startled, dropping his lantern with a small crash. His hands went jerkily to his smooth chin, clutching it. His face was white as a leper's face, and his eyes now were wild and glittering, and his head was drawn low between his black-clad shoulders, so that he seemed a hunchback as he confronted his master. Another queer thing Manuel could notice, and it was that a great lock had been sheared away from the left side of Ruric's black hair.

"What have you learned," says Manuel, "out yonder?"

"I cannot tell you," replied Ruric, laughing sillily, "but in place of it, I will tell you a tale. Yes, yes, Count Manuel, I will tell you a merry story of how a great while ago our common grandmother Eve was washing her children one day near Eden when God called to her. She hid away the children that she had not finished washing: and when the good God asked her if all her children were there, with their meek little heads against His knees, to say their prayers to Him, she answered, Yes. So God told her that what she had tried to hide from God should be hidden from men: and He took away the unwashed children, and made a place for them where everything stays young, and where there is neither good nor evil, because these children are unstained by human sin and unredeemed by Christ's dear blood."

The Count said, frowning: "What drunken nonsense are you talking at broad noon? It is not any foolish tatter of legend that I am requiring of you, my boy, but civil information as to what is to be encountered out yonder."

"All freedom and all delight," young Ruric told him wildly, "and all horror and all rebellion."

Then he talked for a while. When Ruric had ended this talking, Count Manuel laughed scornfully, and spoke as became a well-thought-of nobleman.

Ruric whipped out a knife, and attacked his master, crying, "I follow after my own thinking and my own desires, you old, smug, squinting hypocrite!"

So Count Manuel caught Ruric by the throat, and with naked hands Dom Manuel strangled the young clerk.

"Now I have ridded the world of much poison, I think," Dom Manuel said, aloud, when Ruric lay dead at Manuel's feet. "In any event, I cannot have that sort of talking about my house. Yet I wish I had not trapped the boy into attempting this adventure, which by rights was my adventure. I did not use to avoid adventures."

He summoned two to take away the body, and then Manuel went to his bedroom, and was clothed by his lackeys in a tunic of purple silk, and a coronet was placed on his gray head, and the trumpets sounded as Count Manuel sat down to supper. Pages in ermine served him, bringing Manuel's food upon gold dishes, and pouring red wine and white from golden beakers into Manuel's gold cup. Skilled music-men played upon viols and harps and flutes while the high Count of Poictesme ate richly seasoned food and talked sedately with his wife.

They had not fared thus when Manuel had just come from herding swine, and Niafer was a servant trudging on her mistress' errands, and when these two had eaten very gratefully the Portune's bread and cheese. They had not any need to be heartened with rare wines when they endured so many perils upon Vraidex and in Dun Vlechlan because of their love for each other. For these two had once loved marvelously. Now minstrels everywhere made songs about their all-conquering love, which had derided death; and nobody denied that, even now, these two got on together amicably.

But to-night Dame Niafer was fretted, because the pastry-cook, was young Ruric's cousin, and was, she feared, as likely as not to fling off in a huff on account of Dom Manuel's having strangled the clerk.

"Well, then do you raise the fellow's wages," said Count Manuel.

"That is easily said, and is exactly like a man. Why, Manuel, you surely know that then the meat-cook, and the butler, too, would be demanding more, and that there would be no end to it."

"But, my dear, the boy was talking mad blasphemy, and was for cutting my throat with a great horn-handled knife."

"Of course that was very wrong of him," said Dame Niafer, comfortably, "and not for an instant, Manuel, am I defending his conduct, as I trust you quite understand. But even so, if you had stopped for a moment to think how hard it is to replace a servant

nowadays, and how unreliable is the best of them, I believe you would have seen how completely we are at their mercy."

Then she told him all about her second waiting-woman, while Manuel said, "Yes," and "I never heard the like," and "You were perfectly right, my dear," and so on, and all the while appeared to be thinking about something else in the back of his mind.

EXCURSIONS FROM CONTENT

THEREAFTER Count Manuel could not long remain away from the window through which Ruric had climbed with a lantern, and through which Ruric had returned insanely blaspheming against law and order.

The outlook from this window was somewhat curious. Through the two other windows of Ageus, set side by side with this one, and in appearance similar to it in all respects, the view remained always unchanged, and just such as it was from the third window so long as you looked through the thick clear glass. But when the third window of Ageus was opened, all the sunlit summer world that you had seen through the thick clear glass was gone quite away, and you looked out into a limitless gray twilight wherein not anything was certainly discernible, and the air smelt of spring. It was a curious experience for Count Manuel, thus to regard through the clear glass his prospering domains and all the rewards of his famous endeavors, and then find them vanished as soon as the third window was opened. It was curious, and very interesting; but such occurrences make people dubious about things in which, as everybody knows, it is wisdom's part to believe implicitly.

Now the second day after Ruric had died, the season now being June, Count Manuel stood at the three windows, and saw in the avenue of poplars his wife, Dame Niafer, walking hand in hand with little Melicent. Niafer, despite her lameness, was a fine figure of a woman, so long as he viewed Niafer through the closed window of Ageus. Dom Manuel looked contentedly enough upon the wife who was the reward of his toil and suffering in Dun Vlechlan, and the child who was the reward of his amiability and shrewdness in dealing with the stork, and all seemed well so long as he regarded them through the closed third window.

His hand trembled somewhat as he now opened this window,

to face gray sweetly-scented nothingness. But in the window glass, you saw, the appearance of his flourishing gardens remained unchanged: and in the half of the window to the right hand were quivering poplars, and Niafer and little Melicent were smiling at him, and the child was kissing her hand to him. All about this swinging half of the window was nothingness; he, leaning out, and partly closing this half of the window, could see that behind the amiable picture was nothingness: it was only in the old glass of Ageus that his wife and child appeared to live and move.

Dom Manuel laughed, shortly. "Hah, then," says he, "that tedious dear nagging woman and that priceless snub-nosed brat may not be real. They may be merely happy and prosaic imaginings, hiding the night which alone is real. To consider this possibility is troubling. It makes for even greater loneliness. None the less, I know that I am real, and certainly the grayness before me is real. Well, no matter what befell Ruric yonder, it must be that in this grayness there is some other being who is real and dissatisfied. I must go to seek this being, for here I become as a drugged person among sedate and comfortable dreams which are made doubly weariful by my old master's whispering of that knowledge which was my father's father's."

Then in the gray dusk was revealed a face that was not human, and the round toothless mouth of it spoke feebly, saying, "I am Lubrican, and I come to guide you if you dare follow."

"I have always thought that 'dare' was a quaint word," says Manuel, with the lordly swagger which he kept for company.

So he climbed out of the third window of Ageus. When later he climbed back, a lock had been sheared from the side of his gray head.

Now the tale tells that thereafter Dom Manuel was changed, and his attendants gossiped about it. Dame Niafer also was moved to mild wonderment over the change in him, but did not think it very important, because there is never any accounting for what a husband will do. Besides, there were other matters to consider, for at this time Easterlings came up from Piaja (which they had sacked) into the territories of King Theodoret, and besieged Megaris, and the harried King had sent messengers to Dom Manuel.

"But this is none of my affair," said Manuel, "and I begin to

tire of warfare, and of catching cold by sleeping on hard-won battle-fields."

"You would not take cold, as I have told you any number of times," declared Niafer, "if you would eat more green vegetables instead of stuffing yourself with meat, and did not insist on overheating yourself at the fighting. Still, you had better go."

"My dear, I shall do nothing of the sort."

"Yes, you had better go, for these Easterlings are notorious pagans—"

"Now other persons have been pagans once upon a time, dear snip—"

"A great many things are much worse, Manuel," says Niafer, with that dark implication before which Dom Manuel always fidgeted, because there was no telling what it might mean. "Yes, these Easterlings are quite notorious pagans, and King Theodoret has at least the grace to call himself a Christian, and, besides, it will give me a chance to get your rooms turned out and thoroughly cleaned."

So Manuel, as was his custom, did what Niafer thought best. Manuel summoned his vassals, and brought together his nine lords of the Fellowship of the Silver Stallion, and, without making any stir with horns and clarions, came so swiftly and secretly under cover of night upon the heathen Easterlings that never was seen such slaughter and sorrow and destruction as Dom Manuel wrought upon those tall pagans before he sat down to breakfast.

He attacked from Sannazaro. The survivors therefore fled, having no choice, through the fields east of Megaris. Manuel followed, and slew them in the open.

The realm was thus rescued from dire peril, and Manuel was detained for a while in Megaris, by the ensuing banquets and religious services and the executions of the prisoners and the nonsense of the King's sister. For this romantic and very pretty girl had set King Theodoret to pestering Manuel with magniloquent offers of what Theodoret would do and give if only the rescuer of Megaris would put aside his ugly crippled wife and marry the King's lovely sister.

Manuel laughed at him. Some say that Manuel and the King's sister dispensed with marriage: others accuse Dom Manuel of ex-

hibiting a continence not very well suited to his exalted estate. It is certain, in any event, that he by and by returned into Poictesme, with a cold in his head to be sure, but with fresh glory and much plunder and two new fiefs to his credit: and at Storisende Dom Manuel found that his rooms had been thoroughly cleaned and set in such perfect order that he could lay hands upon none of his belongings, and that the pastry-cook had left.

"It simply shows you!" says Dame Niafer, "and all I have to say is that now I hope you are satisfied."

Manuel laughed without merriment. "Everything is in a conspiracy to satisfy me in these sleek times, and it is that which chiefly plagues me."

He chucked Niafer under the chin, and told her she should be thinking of what a famous husband she had nowadays, instead of bothering about pastry-cooks. Then he fell to asking little Melicent about how much she had missed Father while Father was away, and he dutifully kissed the two other children, and he duly admired the additions to Emmerick's vocabulary during Father's absence. And afterward he went alone into the Room of Ageus.

Thereafter he was used to spend more and more hours in the Room of Ageus, and the change in Count Manuel was more and more talked about. And the summer passed: and whether or no Count Manuel had, as some declared, contracted unholy alliances, there was no denying that all prospered with Count Manuel, and he was everywhere esteemed the most lucky and the least scrupulous rogue alive. But, very certainly, he was changed.

THE PASSING OF MANUEL

THEN as Dom Manuel turned from the window of Ageus, it seemed that young Horvendile had opened the door yonder, and after an instant's pensive staring at Dom Manuel, had gone away. This happened, if it happened at all, so furtively and quickly that Count Manuel could not be sure of it: but he could entertain no doubt as to the other person who was confronting him. There was not any telling how this lean stranger had come into the private apartment of the Count of Poictesme, nor was there any need for Manuel to wonder over the management of this intrusion, for the new arrival was not, after all, an entire stranger to Dom Manuel.

So Manuel said nothing, as he stood there stroking the round straw-colored head of little Melicent. The stranger waited, equally silent. There was no noise at all in the room until afar off a dog began to howl.

"Yes, certainly," Dom Manuel said, "I might have known that my life was bound up with the life of Suskind, since my desire of her is the one desire which I have put aside unsatisfied. O rider of the white horse, you are very welcome."

The other replied: "Why should you think that I know anything about this Suskind or that we of the Léshy keep any account of your doings? No matter what you may elect to think, however, it was decreed that the first person I found here should ride hence on my black horse. But you and the child stand abreast. So you must choose again, Dom Manuel, whether it be you or another who rides on my black horse."

Then Manuel bent down, and he kissed little Melicent. "Go to your mother, dear, and tell her—" He paused here. He queerly moved his mouth, as though it were stiff and he were trying to make it more supple.

Says Melicent, "But what am I to tell her, Father?"

"Oh, a very funny thing, my darling. You are to tell Mother that Father has always loved her over and above all else, and that she is always to remember that, and—why, that in consequence she is to give you some ginger cakes," says Manuel, smiling.

So the child ran happily away, without once looking back, and Manuel closed the door behind her, and he was now quite alone with his lean visitor.

"Come," says the stranger, "so you have plucked up some heart after all! Yet it is of no avail to posture with me, who know you to be spurred to this by vanity rather than by devotion. Oh, very probably you are as fond of the child as is requisite, and of your other children too, but you must admit that after you have played with any one of them for a quarter of an hour you become most heartily tired of the small squirming pest."

Manuel intently regarded him, and squinting Manuel smiled sleepily. "No; I love all my children with the customary paternal infatuation."

"Also you must have your gesture by sending at the last a lying message to your wife, to comfort the poor soul against to-morrow and the day after. You are—magnanimously, you like to think,—according her this parting falsehood, half in contemptuous kindness and half in relief, because at last you are now getting rid of a complacent and muddle-headed fool of whom, also, you are most heartily tired."

"No, no," says Manuel, still smiling; "to my partial eyes dear Niafer remains the most clever and beautiful of women, and my delight in her has not ever wavered. But wherever do you get these curious notions?"

"Ah, I have been with so many husbands at the last, Count Manuel."

And Manuel shrugged. "What fearful indiscretions you suggest! No, friend, that sort of thing has an ill sound, and they should have remembered that even at the last there is the bond of silence."

"Come, come, Count Manuel, you are a queer cool fellow, and you have worn these masks and attitudes with tolerable success, as your world goes. But you are now bound for a diversely ordered

world, a world in which your handsome wrappings are not to the purpose."

"Well, I do not know how that may be," replies Count Manuel, "but at all events there is a decency in these things and an indecency, and I shall never of my own free will expose the naked soul of Manuel to anybody. No, it would be no pleasant spectacle, I think: certainly, I have never looked at it, nor do I mean to. Perhaps, as you assert, some power which is stronger than I may some day tear all masks aside: but this will not be my fault, and I shall even then reserve the right to consider that stripping as a rather vulgar bit of tyranny. Meanwhile I must, of necessity, adhere to my own sense of decorum, and not to that of anybody else, not even to the wide experience of one"—Count Manuel bowed,—"who is, in a manner of speaking, my guest."

"Oh, as always, you posture very tolerably, and men in general will acclaim you as successful in your life. But do you look back! For the hour has come, Count Manuel, for you to confess, as all persons confess at my arrival, that you have faltered between one desire and another, not ever knowing truly what you desire, and not ever being content with any desire when it was accomplished."

"Softly, friend! for I am forced to gather from your wild way of talking that you of the Léshy indeed do not keep any record of our human doings."

The stranger raised what he had of eyebrows.

"But how can we," he inquired, "when we have so many matters of real importance to look after?"

Candid blunt Dom Manuel answered without any anger, speaking even jovially, but in all maintaining the dignity of a high prince assured of his own worth.

"That excuses, then, your nonsensical remarks. I must make bold to inform you that everybody tells me I have very positive achievements to look back upon. I do not care to boast, you understand, and to be forced into self-praise is abhorrent to me. Yet truthfulness is all important at this solemn hour, and anyone hereabouts can tell you it was I who climbed gray Vraidex, and dealt so hardily with the serpents and other horrific protectors of Miramon Lluagor that I destroyed most of them and put the others

to flight. Thereafter men narrate how I made my own terms with the terrified magician, according him his forfeited life in exchange for a promise to live henceforward more respectably and to serve under me in the war which I was already planning against the Northmen. Yes, and men praise me, too, because I managed to accomplish all these things while I was hampered by having to look out for and protect a woman."

"I know," said the lean stranger, "I know you somehow got the better of that romantic visionary half-brother of mine, and made a warrior out of him: and I admit this was rather remarkable. But what does it matter now?"

"Then they will tell you it was I that wisely reasoned with King Helmas until I turned him from folly, and I that with holy arguments converted King Ferdinand from his wickedness. I restored the magic to the robe of the Apsarasas when but for me its magic would have been lost irrevocably. I conquered Freydis, that woman of strange deeds, and single-handed I fought against her spoorns and calcars and other terrors of antiquity, slaying, to be accurate, seven hundred and eighty-two of them. I also conquered the Misery of earth, whom some called Béda, and others Kruchina, and yet others Mimir, after a very notable battle which we fought with enchanted swords for a whole month without ever pausing for rest. I went intrepidly into the paradise of the heathen, and routed all its terrific warders, and so fetched thence the woman whom I desired. Thus, friend, did I repurchase that heroic and unchanging love which exists between my wife and me."

"Yes," said the stranger, "why, that too is very remarkable. But what does it matter now?"

"—For it is of common report among men that nothing has ever been able to withstand Dom Manuel. Thus it was natural enough, men say, that, when the lewd and evil god whom nowadays so many adore as Sesphra of the Dreams was for establishing his power by making an alliance with me, I should have driven him howling and terrified into the heart of a great fire. For myself, I say nothing; but when the very gods run away from a champion there is some adequate reason: and of this exploit, and of all these exploits, and of many other exploits, equally incredible and equally well vouched for, all persons hereabouts will tell you. As to the prodigies

of valor which I performed in redeeming Poictesme from the oppression of the Northmen, you will find documentary evidence in those three epic poems, just to your left there, which commemorate my feats in this campaign—"

"Nobody disputes this campaign also may have been remarkable, and certainly I do not dispute it: for I cannot see that these doings matter a button's worth in my business with you, and, besides, I never argue."

"And no more do I! because I abhor vainglory, and I know these affairs are now a part of established history. No, friend, you cannot destroy my credit in this world, whereas in the world for which I am bound, you tell me, they make no account of our doings. So, whether or not I did these things, I shall always retain, in this world and in the next, the credit for them, without any need to resort to distasteful boasting. And that, as I was going on to explain, is precisely why I do not find it necessary to tell you about these matters, or even to allude to them."

"Oh, doubtless, it is something to have excelled all your fellows in so many ways," the stranger conceded, with a sort of grudging respect: "but, I repeat, what does it matter now?"

"And, if you will pardon my habitual frankness, friend, that query with so constant repetition becomes a trifle monotonous. No, it does not dishearten me, I am past that. No, I once opened a window, the more clearly to appraise the most dear rewards of my endeavors— That moment was my life, that single quiet moment summed up all my living, and"—here Manuel smiled gravely,— "still without boasting, friend, I must tell you that in this moment all doubt as to my attested worth went out of me, who had redeemed a kingdom, and begotten a king, and created a god. So you waste time, my friend, in trying to convince me of all human life's failure and unimportance, for I am not in sympathy with this modern morbid pessimistic way of talking. It has a very ill sound, and nothing whatever is to be gained by it."

The other answered shrewdly: "Yes, you speak well, and you posture handsomely, in every respect save one. For you call me 'friend.' Hah, Manuel, from behind the squinting mask a sick and satiated and disappointed being spoke there, howsoever resolutely you keep up appearances."

"There spoke mere courtesy, Grandfather Death," says Manuel, now openly laughing, "and for the rest, if you again will pardon frankness, it is less with the contents of my heart than with its continued motion that you have any proper concern."

"Truly it is no affair of mine, Count Manuel, nor do any of your doings matter to me. Therefore let us be going now, unless—O most unusual man, who at the last assert your life to have been a successful and important business,—unless you now desire some time wherein to bid farewell to your loved wife and worshipped children and to all your other fine works."

Dom Manuel shrugged broad shoulders. "And to what end! No, I am Manuel. I have lived in the loneliness which is common to all men, but the difference is that I have known it. Now it is necessary for me, as it is necessary for all men, to die in this same loneliness, and I know that there is no help for it."

"Once, Manuel, you feared to travel with me, and you bid Niafer mount in your stead on my black horse, saying, 'Better she than I.'"

"Yes, yes, what curious things we do when we are boys! Well, I am wiser now, for since then I have achieved all that I desired, save only to see the ends of this world and to judge them, and I would have achieved that too, perhaps, if only I had desired it a little more heartily. Yes, yes, I tell you frankly, I have grown so used to getting my desire that I believe, even now, if I desired you to go hence alone you also would obey me."

Grandfather Death smiled thinly. "I reserve my own opinion. But take it what you say is true,—and do you desire me to go hence alone?"

"No," says Manuel, very quietly.

Thereupon Dom Manuel passed to the western window, and he stood there, looking out over broad rolling uplands. He viewed a noble country, good to live in, rich with grain and metal, embowered with tall forests, and watered by pleasant streams. Walled cities it had, and castles crowned its eminences. Very far beneath Dom Manuel the leaded roofs of his fortresses glittered in the sunset, for Storisende guarded the loftiest part of all inhabited Poictesme. He overlooked, directly, the turrets of Ranec and of Asch; to the south was Nérac; northward showed Perdigon: and

the prince of no country owned any finer castles than were these four, in which lived Manuel's servants.

"It is strange," says Dom Manuel, "to think that everything I am seeing was mine a moment since, and it is queer to think of what a famous fellow was this Manuel the Redeemer, and of the fine things he did, and it is appaling to wonder if all the other applauded heroes of mankind are like him. Oh, certainly, Count Manuel's achievements were notable and such as were not known anywhere before, and men will talk of them for a long while. Yet, looking back,—now that this famed Count of Poictesme means less to me,—why, I seem to see only the strivings of an ape reft of his tail, and grown rusty at climbing, who has reeled blunderingly from mystery to mystery, with pathetic makeshifts, not understanding anything, greedy in all desires, and always honeycombed with poltroonery. So in a secret place his youth was put away in exchange for a prize that was hardly worth the having; and the fine geas which his mother laid upon him was exchanged for the common geas of what seems expected."

"Such notions," replied Grandfather Death, "are entertained by many of you humans in the light-headed time of youth. Then common-sense arises like a light formless cloud about your goings, and you half forget these notions. Then I bring darkness."

"In that quiet dark, my friend, it may be I shall again become the Manuel whom I remember, and I may get back again my own undemonstrable ideas, in place of the ideas of other persons, to entertain me in that darkness. So let us be going thither."

"Very willingly," said Grandfather Death; and he started toward the door.

"Now, pardon me," says Manuel, "but in Poictesme the Count of Poictesme goes first in any company. It may seem to you an affair of no importance, but nowadays I concede the strength as well as the foolishness of my accustomed habits, and all my life long I have gone first. So do you ride a little way behind me, friend, and carry this shroud and napkin, till I have need of them."

Then the Count armed and departed from Storisende, riding on the black horse, in jeweled armor, and carrying before him his black shield upon which was emblazoned the silver stallion of Poictesme and the motto *Mundus vult decipi*. Behind him was

Grandfather Death on the white horse, carrying the Count's grave-clothes in a neat bundle. They rode toward the sunset, and against the yellow sunset each figure showed jet black.

And thereafter Count Manuel was seen no more in Poictesme, nor did anyone ever know certainly whither he journeyed. There was a lad called Jurgen, the son of Coth of the Rocks, who came to Storisende in a frenzy of terror, very early the next morning, with a horrific tale of incredible events witnessed upon Upper Morven: but the child's tale was not heeded, because everybody knew that Count Manuel was unconquerable, and—having everything which men desire,—would never be leaving all these amenities of his own will, and certainly would never be taking part in any such dubious doings. Therefore little Jurgen was spanked, alike for staying out all night and for his wild lying: and they of Poictesme awaited the return of their great Dom Manuel; and not for a long while did they suspect that Manuel had departed homeward, after having succeeded in everything. Nor for a long while was the whole of little Jurgen's story made public.

FROM

The Silver Stallion

ABOVE PARADISE

OUR *selection from* The Silver Stallion *is the whole* (*with one brief excision*) *of Book IX, "Above Paradise."* The Silver Stallion *is the story of an idea, the idea of a Redeemer, who is Manuel himself as understood and cherished by the lords in the Fellowship of the Silver Stallion. They had known Count Manuel during his life, and so are the immediate disciples through whom the legend of a messianic Manuel is established not only in Poictesme but throughout Christendom. As in the case of many another legend of a redeemer who is to return again, a legend which recurs often in human history, belief in Manuel gradually fades, and among the heroes of this book is retained only by Donander Verytur* (*the subject of this selection*), *who by his demiurgy and his faith is above paradise and above the temporary legend of Manuel; is, indeed, God Himself. The story of Donander is in its cosmic sweep a superb example of deliberately poetical myth-making, and it is also in its very confusion of deiform powers a commentary on how myths come into being. This commentary will, of course, be lost to readers who think that some one account of creation possesses eternal verity and that all other accounts are only pagan superstitions and heresies. But no reader of poetry who is credulous of all poetry can quite miss the splendor of this particular legend.*

J. M.

ABOVE PARADISE

LVII

Now the tale speaks of the rebellion of Maugis, who was the son of Donander of Évre, the Thane of Aigremont. For Count Manuel's youngest child, Ettarre, born after her father's passing, was now come to the full flowering of her strange beauty: and it was at this time—with the result that two young gentlemen went out of their wits, four killed themselves, and seven married,—that Ettarre was betrothed to Guiron des Rocques, of the famous house of Gâtinais. And it was at this time also that young Maugis d'Aigremont resorted to a more stirring solace than might be looked for in imbecility or death or a vicarious bedfellow. He seized and carried off Ettarre. His company of ten was pursued by Count Emmerick and Guiron with twenty followers; and after a skirmish in Bovion the girl was recaptured unharmed.

But Maugis escaped. And after that he went into open rebellion against Count Emmerick's authority, and occupied those fastnesses in the Taunenfels which Othmar Black-Tooth had once held for a long while against the assaults of Count Manuel himself.

History in fine appeared to honor banality by repeating itself, with the plain difference that gaunt Maugis was equally a great captain and a great lover and in every way more formidable than Othmar had been, whereas Emmerick, elsewhere than at a banquet, was not formidable at all. Moreover, Emmerick in these days lacked even any stronger kinsman to lean upon, for his brother-in-law Heitman Michael was now in Muscovy, Count Gui of Montors was dead, and Ayrart de Montors had removed to the court of King Theodoret. Emmerick had, thus, to lead his troops only that blustering but gifted young Fauxpas de Nointel or that utterly unreasonable Guiron, who expected, of all persons, the Count of Poictesme to lead these troops.

So Emmerick wavered; he made terms; he even winked at

Guiron's capture by the pirates of Caer Idryn, in order to be rid of this troublesome posturer who insisted upon dragging Emmerick into so much uncomfortable fighting: and Maugis, since these terms did not include his possession of Ettarre, soon broke them. Thus was the warring that now arose in Poictesme resumed: and, because of Maugis' great lust and daring, and Count Emmerick's supineness, and the ever-blundering obstinacy of loud Fauxpas de Nointel, this war dragged on for many wearying fevered years.

Then Emmerick's eldest sister, Madame Melicent, returned from oversea with her second husband, the Comte de la Forêt, a gentleman who remarkably lacked patience with brigands and with shilly-shallying. This Perion de la Forêt took charge of matters, with such resolution that out of hand Guiron was rescued from his captivity. Maugis was overpowered and killed, the Ettarre whom he had desired to his own hurt was married to Guiron, and Count Emmerick gave a banquet in honor of the event. Such was this Perion's impetuosity.

It is of these matters that the tale speaks in passing. For the tale now is of Donander of Évre, who was the father of Maugis, and who would not break faith with that Emmerick who, howsoever unworthily, sat in the place of that great master whom Donander had been privileged to serve even in this mortal life. For Donander was the only one of the lords of the Silver Stallion who accepted with joy and with unbounded faith the legend of Manuel, and who in all his living bore testimony to it.

This Donander of Évre had been the youngest of the fellowship, he was at this time but newly made a widower while yet in his forties, and whatsoever he lacked in brilliance of wit he atoned for with his hardiness in battle. Yet in this war he chose not to display his prowess, since the fighting was between the son of Dom Manuel and the son of Donander himself. He chose instead exile.

First, though, he went to Storisende; and, standing beside the holy sepulchre, he looked up for some while at the serene great effigy of Manuel, poised there in eternal watchfulness over Donander's native land, and bright with all the jewels of the world. Donander knelt and prayed in this sacred place, as he knew, for the last time. Then Donander, without any complaining, and

without any grieving now for his wife's death, went out of Poictesme, a landless man; and he piously took service under Prince Balein of Targamon (the same that twenty years ago had wooed Queen Morvyth, a little before the evil times of her long imprisonment and the cutting off of her head), because this always notably religious prince was now once more harrying the pagan Northmen.

Thus it was that Donander also at the last went out of Poictesme, not by his own election, to encounter the most strange of all the dooms which befell the lords of the Silver Stallion after the passing of Dom Manuel.

LVIII

This doom began its workings in the long field below Rathgor, when Palnatoki rode forth and made his brag. "I am the champion of the Ænseis. In the Northland there is nobody mightier than I; and if a mightier person live elsewhere, it is not yet proven. Who is there in this place will try a fall with me?"

Behind him the pagan army waited, innumerable, and terrible, and deplorably ill-mannered. These shouted now:

"We cry a holmgang. Who will fight with Red Palnatoki, that is overlord of the Swan's bath, and that slew the giants in Noenhir?"

Then from the opposed ranks came clanking, and shining in full armor, Donander of Évre. And he said:

"I, howsoever unworthy, messire, am the person who will withstand you. I also have fought before this morning. Under Count Manuel's banner of the Silver Stallion I have done what I might. That much I will again do here to-day, and upon every day between this day and the holy Morrow of Judgment."

After that the Christian army shouted: "There is none mightier than Donander! Also, he is very gratifyingly modest."

But Palnatoki cried out scornfully: "Your utmost will not avail this morning! Behind me musters all the might of the Ænseis, that are the most high of gods above Lærath, and their strength shall be shown here through me."

"Behind the endeavors of every loyal son of the Church," Donander said, "are the blessed saints and the bright archangels."

"Indeed, Donander, that may very well be the truth," replied

Red Palnatoki. "The old gods and the gods of Rome have met to-day; and we are their swords."

"Your gods confess their weakness, Messire Palnatoki, by picking the better weapon," Donander answered him, courteously.

With these amenities discharged, they fought. Nowhere upon Earth could have been found a pair of more stalwart warriors: each had no equal anywhere existent between seas and mountains save in his adversary: so neatly were they matched indeed that, after a half-hour of incredible battling, it was natural enough they should kill each other simultaneously. And then the unfortunate error occurred, just as each naked soul escaped from the dying body.

For now out of the north came Kjalar, the fair guide of pagan warriors to eternal delights in the Hall of the Chosen; and from the zenith sped, like a shining plummet, Ithuriel to fetch the soul of the brave champion of Christendom to the felicities of the golden city walled about with jasper of the Lord God of Sabaoth. Both emissaries had been attending the combat until the arrival of their part therein; both, as seasoned virtuosi of warfare, had been delighted by this uncommonly fine fight: and in their pleased excitement they somehow made the error of retrieving each the other's appointed prey. It happened thus that the soul of Donander of Evre fared northward, asleep in the palm of Kjalar's hand, while Ithuriel conveyed the soul of Red Palnatoki to the heaven of Jahveh.

LIX

Ithuriel's blunder, it is gratifying to record, did not in the outcome really matter. For Christendom just then was at heated odds over points of theology not very clearly understood in Jahveh's heaven, where in consequence no decisions were hazarded upon the merits of the controversy; and the daily invoices of Christian champions and martyrs of all sects were being admitted to blessedness as fast as they murdered one another.

Moreover, Red Palnatoki was, by the articles of his stern Nordic creed, a fatalist. When he discovered what had happened, and the strange salvation which had been put upon him, his religion therefore assured him that this too had been predestined by the wayward Norns, and he piously made no complaining. The eternal life which he had inherited, with no fighting in it for the present,

and no stronger drink than milk, was not up to human expectation, but the tall sea-rover had long ago found out that few things are. Meanwhile he could, at any rate, look forward to that promised last great battle, when those praiseworthy captains Gog and Magog (with, as Palnatoki understood it, a considerable company of fine fighting-men), would attack the four-square city, and when Palnatoki would have again a chance really to enjoy himself in defending the camp of the saints. * * * *

Without any sulking under his halo, Palnatoki bent resolutely to his first harp-lesson; and, in place of protests, civilly voiced alleluias. * * * *

And in Jahveh's heaven, therefore, all went agreeably, and as smoothly as Red Palnatoki at just this point goes out of this story.

LX

When Donander of Évre awoke in the Northern paradise, he also was content enough. It was a strange and not what you would call a cozy place, this gold-roofed hall with its five hundred and forty mile-wide doors: and the monsters, in the likeness of a stag and of a she-goat, which straddled above the building, perpetually feeding upon the lower leaves of the great tree called Lærath, seemed to Donander pre-eminently outlandish creatures, animals under whose bellies no really considerate persons would have erected a residence. Yet, like Palnatoki, Donander of Évre was an old campaigner, who could be tolerably comfortable anywhere. Nor was to discover himself among pagans a novel experience, since in his mortal life Donander had ridden at adventure in most corners of the world, and rather more than half of his finest enemies and of his opponents in many delightful encounters had been infidels.

"Excepting always their unfortunate religious heresies," he was used to concede, "I have no fault to pick with heathen persons, whom in the daily and nocturnal affairs of life I have found quite as friendly and companionable as properly baptized ladies."

In fine, he got on well enough with the flaxen-haired spirits of these Northern kings and skalds and jarls and vikingar. They stared, and some guffawed, when he fitted out a little shrine, in which Donander prayed decorously, every day at the correct hours,

for the second coming of Manuel and for the welfare of Donander's soul upon the holy Morrow of Judgment. Yet, after all, these boreal ghosts conceded, in paradise if anywhere a man should be permitted utterly to follow his own tastes, even in imaginative eschatology. And when they talked their really pathetic nonsense about being the guest of Sidvrar the Weaver and Constrainer, and about living forever through his bounty thus happily in the Hall of the Chosen, it was Donander's turn to shrug. Even had there been no other discrepancies, everybody knew that heaven had, not five hundred and forty golden gates, but only twelve entrances, each carved from a single pearl and engraved with the name of a tribe of Israel.

"Besides," Donander asked, "who is this Weaver and Constrainer? Certainly, I never heard of him before."

"He is the King and Father of the Ænseis," they told him. "He is overlord of that unimaginable folk who dwell in Ydalir; and who do not kill their deformed and weakling children, as we were used to do, but instead cast from the ivory ramparts of Ydalir all such degenerate offspring, to be the gods of races who are not blond and Nordic."

Donander, as a loyal son of the Church, could only shake his head over such nonsense, and the innumerous other errors by which these heathen were being misled to everlasting ruin. Aloud, Donander repeated his final verdict as to the pretensions of this Sidvrar, by saying again, "I never heard of him."

Nevertheless, Donander went without real discontent among the pleasures of paradise, and he joined in all the local sports. In common with the other dead, he ate the flesh of the inexhaustible boar, and with them he drank of the strong mead which sustained them in perpetual tipsiness. And he sedately rode out with the others, every morning, into the meadows where these blessed pagan lords fought joyously among themselves until midday. At noon a peal of thunder would sound, the slain and wounded warriors were of a sudden revivified and cured of their hurts, and were reunited to whatsoever arms and heads and legs the contestants had lost in their gaming: and the company would return fraternally to the gold-roofed hall, where they ate and drank and made their brags until they slept.

"Yet perhaps our banquets might, messieurs," Donander had suggested, after a century or so of these rough-and-ready pleasures, "be not unadvantageously seasoned with the delights of feminine companionship, if only for dessert?"

"But it is one of our appointed blessings to have done with women and their silly ways," cried out the vikingar, "now that we have entered paradise."

And Donander, who had always been notable for his affectionate nature, and who had served vigorously so many ladies par amours, seemed grieved to hear the uttering of a saying so unchivalrous. Still, he said nothing.

Much time passed thus; and the worlds were changed: but in the eyes of Donander of Évre, as in the eyes of all who feasted in the Hall of the Chosen, there was no knowledge nor any fear of time, because these blessed dead lived now in perpetual tipsiness. And, as befitted a loyal son of the Church, Donander, without any complaining, in the surroundings which Heaven out of Heaven's wisdom had selected for him, awaited the second coming of Manuel and the holy Morrow of Judgment.

LXI

Then, from the highest part of this paradise, and from the unimaginable yew-vales of Ydalir which rose above the topmost branches of the tree called Lærath, descended blue-robed Vanadis, the lady of Reginlief, dear to the Ænseis. She had disposed of five inefficient husbands, in impetuous mythological manners, but still a loneliness and a desire was upon her; and with the eternal optimism of widowhood she came to look for a sixth husband among these great-thewed heroes who jeered at women and their wiles.

But Donander of Évre was the person who for two reasons found instant favor in her eyes when she came upon Donander refreshing himself after the pleasant fatigues of that morning's combat, and about his daily bath in the shining waters of the river Gipul. So did the dead call that stream which flowed from the antlers of the monstrous stag who stood eternally nibbling and munching above the Hall of the Chosen.

"Here is an eminently suitable person," Vanadis reflected. Aloud,

she said, "Hail, friend! and does a stout fine fellow of your length and of your thickness go languidly shunning work or seeking work?"

Stalwart Donander climbed out of the clear stream of Gipul. He came, smilingly and with a great exaltation, toward the first woman whom he had seen in seven hundred years. And, so constant is the nature of woman, that divine Vanadis regarded Donander in just the reflective wonder with which, more than seven hundred years ago, barbarian Utsumé had looked at Coth in the market-place of Porutsa.

Donander said, "What is your meaning, madame?"

Vanadis replied, "I have a desire which, a fine portent has informed me, agrees with your desire."

Then Vanadis, with godlike candor, made wholly plain her meaning. And since Donander's nature was affectionate, he assented readily enough to the proposals of this somewhat ardent but remarkably handsome young woman, who went abroad thus unconventionally in a car drawn by two cats, and who, in her heathenish and figurative way, described herself as a goddess. He stipulated only that, so soon as he was dressed, they be respectably united according to whatever might be the marriage laws of her country and diocese.

The Ænseis were not used in such matters to stand upon ceremony. Nevertheless, they conferred together,—Aduna and Ord and Hleifner and Rönn and Giermivul, and the other radiant sons of Sidvrar. It was they who good-humoredly devised a ceremony, with candles and promises and music and a gold ring, and all the other features which seemed expected by the quaint sort of husband whom their beloved Vanadis had fetched up from the Hall of the Chosen. But her sisters took no part in this ceremony, upon the ground that they considered such public preliminaries to be unheard-of and brazen.

Thus was Donander made free of Ydalir, the land that was above Lærath and the other heavens and paradises: and after Donander's seven hundred years of celibacy, he and his bride got on together in her bright palace lovingly enough. Vanadis found that she too, comparatively speaking, had lived with her five earlier husbands in celibacy.

LXII

Now the one change that Donander made an explicit point of was to fit out in this palace of Reginlief a chapel. There he worshiped daily at the correct hours, so near as one could calculate them in an endless day, and there he prayed for the second coming of Manuel and for the welfare of Donander's soul upon the holy Morrow of Judgment.

"But, really, my heart," his Vanadis would say, ineffectually, "you have been dead for so long now! and, just looking at it sensibly, it does seem such a waste of eternity!"

"Have done, my darling, with your heathen nonsense!" Donander would reply. "Do I not know that in heaven there is no marrying or giving in marriage? How then can heaven be this place in which two live so friendlily and happily?"

Meanwhile, to the pagan priests wherever the Ænseis were adored, had been revealed the sixth and the wholly successful marriage of blue-robed Vanadis: her spouse had been duly deified: and new temples had been builded in honor of the bright lady of Reginlief and of the Man-God, Donander Veratyr, her tireless savior from vain desire and bodily affliction. And time went stealthily as a stream flowing about and over the worlds, and changing them, and wearing all away. But to Donander it was as if he yet lived in the thrice-lucky afternoon on which he married his Vanadis. For, since whatever any of the Ænseis desired must happen instantly, thus Ydalir knew but one endless day: and immeasurably beneath its radiance, very much as sullen and rain-swollen waters go under a bridge upon which young lovers have met in the sunlight of April, so passed wholly unnoted by any in Ydalir the flowing and all the jumbled wreckage of time.

But it befell, too, after a great many of these æons which Ydalir ignored and men cannot imagine, that Donander saw one of his smaller brothers-in-law about a droll-looking sport. Donander asked questions: and he learned this dark brisk little Koshchei was about a game at which the younger Ænseis were used to play.

"And how does one set about it?" Donander asked then.

"Why, thus and thus, my heart," his wife replied. Fond Vanadis was glad enough to find for him some outdoor diversion which

would woo him from that stuffy chapel and its depressing pictures of tortured persons and its unwholesome fogs of stifling incense.

Then Donander broke away a bough from the tree called Lærath, saying meanwhile the proper word of power. Sitting beside the fifth river of Ydalir, he cut strips of bark from this bough, with the green-handled knife which Vanadis had given him, and he cast these strips about at random. He found it perfectly true that those scraps of bark which touched the water became fish, those which he flung into the air became birds, and those which fell upon the ground became animals and men.

He almost instantly, indeed, had enough creatures to populate a world, but no world, of course, for them to animate and diversify. So Donander destroyed these creatures, and placed one of the lighter weirds upon the beetle Karu. That huge good-tempered insect fell at once to shaping a ball of mud, and to carving it with mountains and plains and valleys. Then Karu burrowed his way into the center of this ball of mud: and from the hole into which Karu had entered came all kinds of living beings needful for the animating and diversifying of a world; and these began to breed and to kill one another and to build their appropriate lairs, in nests and dens and cities.

This so excited another beetle, named Khypera, that he behaved in a fashion not at all convenient to record; but many living creatures were at once brought forth by his remarkable conduct, and plants and creeping things and men and women, too, came out of the moisture which Khypera let fall.

That was the second demiurgy of Donander Veratyr. Then with a golden egg Donander made another world: and from the entrails of a spider he drew another; from the carrion of a dead cow he made a fifth world; and with the aid of a raven Donander made yet one more. Thereafter he went on, in turn attempting each method that any Ans had ever practiced.

These sports amused Donander for a long while and yet another while. And Vanadis, apart from her natural pleasure in the augmented vigor he got from so much. open-air exercise, bright Vanadis smiled at his playing, in the way of any wife who finds her husband occupied upon the whole less reprehensibly than you

would expect of the creature. And the sons of Sidvrar also were used, as yet, to smile not unfriendlily when they passed where Donander was busy with his toys. Even the sisters of Vanadis only said that really of all things, and that of course they had expected it from the very first.

Sidvrar Vafudir, the Weaver and Constrainer, said nothing whatever. . . . So everybody was content for a long while and yet another while.

And throughout both these whiles Donander was pottering with his worlds, keeping them bright with thunderbolts and volcanic eruptions, diligently cleansing them of parasites with one or another pestilence, scouring them with whirlwinds, and perpetually washing them with cloud-bursts and deluges. His toys had constantly such loving care to keep them in perfect condition. Meanwhile, his skill increased abreast with his indulgence in demiurgy, and Donander thought of little else. He needed now no aid from ravens and beetles. He had but, he found, to desire a world, and at once his desire took form: its light was divided from its darkness, the waters gathered into one place, the dry land appeared and pullulated with living creatures, all in one dexterous complacent moment of self-admiration.

His earlier made stars and comets and suns and asteroids Donander Veratyr began destroying one by one, half vexedly, half in real amusement at the archaic, bungling methods he had outgrown. In their places he would set spinning, and glittering, and popping, quite other planetary systems which, for the moment in any event, appeared to him remarkably adroit craftsmanship. And everywhere upon the worlds which he had made, and had not yet annihilated, men worshiped Donander Veratyr: and in his pleasant home at Reginlief, high over Lærath and every other heaven and paradise, Donander worshiped the god of the fathers and of all the reputable neighbors of Donander of Évre; and in such pagan surroundings as Heaven out of Heaven's wisdom had selected for him, awaited the second coming of Manuel and the holy Morrow of Judgment.

LXIII

Then of a sudden gleaming Sidvrar Vafudir, the Weaver and Constrainer, came with his wolves frisking about him. He came

with his broad-brimmed hat pulled down about his eyes decisively. He came thus to his daughter, blue-robed Vanadis, and he stated that, while patience was a virtue, there was such a thing as overdoing it, no matter how little he himself might care for the talking of idle busybodies, because, howsoever long she might argue, and always had done from childhood, being in this and in many other undesirable respects precisely like her mother, even so, no sensible Ans could ever deny her husband's conduct was ridiculous: and that, said Sidvrar Vafudir, was all there was to it.

"Do not bluster so, my heart," replied Vanadis, "about the facts of nature. All husbands are ridiculous. Who should be surer of this than I, who have had six husbands, unless it be you, who as goat and titmouse and birch-tree have been the husband of six hundred?"

"That is all very well," said Sidvrar, "in addition to not being what we were discussing. This Donander of yours is now one of the Ænseis, he is an Ans of mature standing, and it is not right for him to be making worlds. That is what we were discussing."

"Yet what divine hands anywhere," asked Vanadis, "are clean of demiurgy?"

"That is not what we were discussing, either. When you brats of mine were children you had your toys, and you played with and you smashed your toys. Nobody denies that, because you all did, from Rönn to Aduna, and even little Koshchei used to be having his fling at such nonsense. Now do you look at the very fine and sober fellow he is, with all his pranks behind him, and do you ask Koshchei what he thinks of that husband of yours! But instead, you prefer to wander away from what we were discussing, because you know as well as I do that for children to be playing at such games is natural enough, besides keeping the young out of grave mischief, now and then. Though, to be sure, nothing does that very long nor very often, as I tell you plainly, my Vanadis, for do you look, too, as a most grievous example, at the wasteful and untidy way you destroy your husbands!"

"Donander Veratyr I shall not ever destroy," replied Vanadis, smiling, "because of the loving human heart and the maddening human ways he has brought out of his Poictesme, and for two other reasons."

"Then it is I who will put an end, if not to him, at least to his nonsense. For this Donander of yours is still playing with stars and planets, and setting off his comets, and exploding his suns, and that is not becoming."

"Well, well, do you, who are the Father and Master of All, have your own will with him, so far as you can get it," Vanadis returned, still with that rather reminiscent smile. She had now lived for a great while with this sixth husband of hers, who had a human heart in him and human ways.

LXIV

Sidvrar went then from Vanadis to Donander. But the Constrainer found there was no instant manner of constraining Donander Veratyr into a conviction that Donander of Évre had died long ago, and had become an Ans. People, Donander stated, did not do such things; when people died they went either to heaven or to hell: and further reasoning with Donander seemed to accomplish no good whatever. For Donander, as a loyal son of the Church, now shrugged pityingly at the heathen nonsense talked by his father-in-law. He stroked the heads of Sidvrar's attendant wolves, he listened to the Weaver and Constrainer with an indulgence more properly reserved for the feeble-minded; and he said, a little relishingly, that Messire Sidvrar would be wiser on the holy Morrow of Judgment.

Then Sidvrar Vafudir became Sidvrar Yggr, the Meditating and Terrible. Then Sidvrar fell about such magicking as he had not needed to use since he first entered into the eternal yew-vales of Ydalir. Then, in a word, Sidvrar unclosed the oval window in Reginlief that opened upon space and time and upon the frozen cinders which once had been worlds and suns and stars, and which their various creators had annihilated, as one by one the Ænseis had put away their childhood and its playing.

Among such wreckage sped pretentiously the yet living worlds which Donander had made. These toys, when seen thus closely through the magic of the oval window, were abristle with the spires of the temples and the cathedrals in which they that lived, as yet, upon these worlds were used to worship. In all these churches

men invoked Donander Veratyr. Through that charmed window now, for the first time, came to his ears the outcry of his clergy and laity: nowhere was there talk of another god, not even where from many worlds arose the lecturing of those who explained away their ancestors' quaint notions about Donander the Man-God, the Savior from Vain Desire, the Preserver from Bodily Affliction, and proved there could not be any such person. And to Donander, looking out of the window at Reginlief, all these things showed as a swarming of ants or as a writhing of very small maggots about the worlds which he had made to divert him: and in the face as in the heart of Donander awoke inquietation.

"If this be a true showing," Donander said, by and by, "show now that Earth which is my home."

After a while of searching, Sidvrar found for him the drifting clinker which had once been Earth. Upon its glistering nakedness was left no living plant nor any breathing creature, for the Morrow of Judgment was long past, and Earth's affairs had been wound up. Upon no planet did anyone remember the god whom Donander worshiped, now that Jahveh had ended playing, and his toys were broken or put away. Upon many planets were the temples of Donander Veratyr, and the rising smoke of his sacrifice, and the cries of his worshipers as they murdered one another in their disputing over points of theology which Donander could not clearly understand.

Nor did he think about these things. Instead, Donander Veratyr, who was the last of the Æneis to play at this unprofitable sport of demiurgy, was now remembering the days and the moon-lighted nights of his youth, and the dear trivial persons whom he had then loved and revered. He did not think about the two wives whom he had married upon Earth, nor about his son Maugis, nor about any of the happenings of Donander's manhood. He thought of, for no reason at all, the shabby little village priest who had confirmed him, and of the father and mother who had been all-wise and able to defend one from every evil, and of the tall girl whose lips had, once, and before any other lips, been sweeter than were the joys of Ydalir. And he thought of many other futile things, all now attested always to have been futile, which long ago had seemed so very important to the boy that, in serving famous Manuel of Poictesme,

had postured so high-heartedly in one of the smallest provinces of an extinct planet.

And Donander wrung immortal hands, saying, "If this be a true showing, what thing have I become, who can no longer love or reverence anything! who can have no care for any Morrow of Judgment! and to whom space reveals only the living of these indistinguishable and unclean and demented insects!"

The cry of his worshipers came up to him. "Thou art God, the Creator and Preserver of all of us Thy children! Thou art Donander Veratyr, in Whom is our firm hope! Thou art the Man-God, That wilt grant unto us justice and salvation upon the holy Morrow of Judgment!"

"Is it," Donander said, "of Manuel that these little creatures speak?"

"We know not of any Manuel," the universe replied to him. "We only know that Thou art God, our Creator and Preserver."

Then, after regarding again the vermin which swarmed about his worlds, Donander said, like one a little frightened, "Is God thus?"

They answered him, fondly and reverently, "How can God be otherwise than Thou art?"

At that Donander shuddered. But in the same moment he said, "If this be a true showing, and if I be indeed a god, and the master of all things, the human heart which survives in me wills now to create that to-morrow for which these weaklings and I too have so long waited."

And Sidvrar pointed out, as patiently as outraged common-sense permitted: "Still, still, you are talking nonsense! How can an Ans create to-morrow?"

Donander asked, in turn, "Why not, if you be omnipotent?"

"It is because we are omnipotent. Thus in Ydalir there is but one day, from which not even in imagination can any Ans escape. For, whatever any of the Ænseis desires, even if it be a to-morrow, must instantly happen and exist; and so must be to-day. That ought to be plain enough."

"It is not plain," Donander answered, "although, the way you put it, I admit, it does sound logical. Therefore, if this indeed be the way of omnipotence, and if none may escape his day, and if I

be a trapped and meager immortal, and the master only of those things which are to-day, then now let all things end! For my heart stays human. To-day does not know the runes of my heart's contentment. My heart will not be satisfied unless it enter into that morrow of justice and salvation which the overlords of men, as you now tell me, cannot desire nor plan. So now, if this be a true showing, now let all things end!"

Within the moment Donander saw that, while he was yet speaking, space was emptied of life. Down yonder now were no more men and women anywhere. None any longer awaited an oncoming day which was to content one utterly with an assured bright heritage, divined in the dreams which allured and derided all human living endlessly, and condemned the heart of every man to be a stranger to contentment upon this side of to-morrow. That ageless dream about to-morrow, and about the redeeming which was to come—to-morrow—had passed, as the smoke of a little incense passes; and with it had gone out of being, too, those whom it had nourished and sustained. There were no more men and women anywhere. Donander could see only many cinders adrift in a bleak loneliness: and Donander of Évre must endure eternally as Donander Veratyr, a lonely and uncomprehended immortal among his many peers.

"So do you be sensible about it, my son-in-law," said Sidvrar Vafudir, when he had spoken the word of power which closed forever that cheerless window, out of which nobody was ever to look any more,—"be sensible, if there indeed stay any root of intelligence in you. And do you henceforward live more fittingly, as a credit to your wife's family. And do you put out of mind those cinders and those ashes and those clinkers that were the proper sport of your youth. Such is the end of every wise person's saga."

LXV

Thereafter the King and Father of the Ænseis departed, well pleased with the lesson taught that whippersnapper. And Donander also smiled, and he looked contentedly about his pleasant quarters in the everlasting vales of Ydalir.

"Still, not for a great deal," Donander reflected, "would I be

treading in that old sorcerer's sandals; and it is a fair shame that I should have such a person for a father-in-law."

For, as a loyal son of the Church, Donander did not doubt that the wonders which Sidvrar had just shown to him could only be an illusion planned with some evil spirit's aid to tempt Donander away from respectability and the true faith. In consequence Donander Veratyr, that had been the Creator and Destroyer of all things except the human heart which survived in him, went now into the chapel of Reginlief. There he decorously said the prayers to which Donander was accustomed, and he prayed for the second coming of Manuel and for the welfare of Donander's soul upon the holy Morrow of Judgment.

FROM

Chivalry

THE STORY OF THE CHOICES

THE *stories included in* Chivalry *are various dramatic manifestations of the chivalrous attitude toward life. The heroines are queens* (Dizain des Reines *is the subtitle*), *and the liberties taken with royal genealogy, which historians know to be a matter of accurate documentary record, are attributable solely to the free un-Gradgrindian fancy of the original French chronicler, Nicolas de Caen. How much of the true medieval color and tone the Cabell versions preserve in modern English can be determined only by expert medievalists who add to scholarly knowledge the deeper wisdom afforded by the poetic sense. More important than any such erudite question is the primary artistic fact that the tales are all first-rate pieces of yarning, the situations dramatically conceived and swiftly realized, the phrasing vivacious and fanciful, with that extra touch of verbal skill which does not indeed embroider a tale but is the very pattern and texture of the tale itself. Readers who are curious of literary devices will note in Gregory Darrell's final reply to the Queen the use of a varied lyric refrain, "I choose death without debate," expressive of one mood of chivalry and appropriate to a style of romance in which song and impassioned speech are almost undifferentiated. A learned commentator, one Warren A. McNeill, has pointed out, in a monograph called "Cabellian Harmonics," the many instances in which Cabell's prose approaches, or even fully falls into, metrical lilts and prosodic arrangements. Without cunning details of style, the naked interest of "The Story of the Choices," is in the three-cornered contest of will between the lover, the innocent girl, and the vicious Queen.*

J. M.

THE STORY OF THE CHOICES

In the year of grace 1327 (thus Nicolas begins) you could have found in all England no couple more ardent in affection or in despair more affluent than Rosamund Eastney and Sir Gregory Darrell. She was Lord Berners' only daughter, a brown beauty, of extensive repute, thanks to a retinue of lovers who were practitioners of the Gay Science, and who had scattered broadcast innumerable canzons and all kinds of songs in her honor: and Lord Berners was a man to accept the world as he found it.

"Dompnedex!" the Earl was wont to say; "in sincerity I am fond of Gregory Darrell, and if he chooses to make love to my daughter that is none of my affair. The eyes and the brain preserve a proverbial warfare, which is the source of all amenity, for without lady-service there would be no songs and tourneys, no measure and no good breeding; and a man delinquent in domnei is no more to be valued than an ear of corn without the grain. No: I am so profoundly an admirer of Love that I can never willingly behold him slain, of a surfeit, by matrimony; besides, this rapscallion Gregory could not to advantage exchange purses with Lazarus in the parable; and, moreover, Rosamund is to marry the Earl of Sarum a little after All Saints' Day."

"Sarum!" people echoed. "Why, the old goat has had four wives already!"

And the Earl would spread his hands. "These redundancies are permissible to one of the wealthiest persons in England," he was used to submit.

Thus it fell out that Sir Gregory came and went at his own discretion as concerned Lord Berners' fief of Ordish, all through those choppy times of warfare between King Edward and Queen Ysabeau. Lord Berners, for one, vexed himself not inordinately over the outcome, since he protested the King's armament to consist

of royal catamites, and the Queen's of royal paramours. So the easy-going, fat Earl had with entire serenity declined to back either Dick or the Devil.

But at last the Queen got resistless aid from Count William of Hainault (in a way to be told about hereafter), and the King was captured by her forces, and was imprisoned in Berkeley Castle. There they held the second Edward to reign in England, who was the unworthy son of Dame Ellinor and of that squinting King Sire Edward about whom I have told you in the two tales preceding this tale.

It was in the September of this year, a little before Michaelmas, that they brought Sir Gregory Darrell to be judged by the Queen; notoriously the knight had been her husband's adherent. "Death!" croaked Adam Orleton, who sat to the right hand, and, "Young De Spencer's death!" amended the Earl of March, with wild laughter. But Ysabeau leaned back in her great chair,—a handsome woman, stoutening now from gluttony and from too much wine,—and she regarded her fettered prisoner with lazy amiability.

"And what was your errand in Figgis Wood?" she demanded,—"or are you mad, then, Gregory Darrell, that you dare ride past my gates alone?"

He curtly said, "I rode for Ordish."

The Queen deliberated this. Then the Queen said, to Roger Mortimer,—that Earl of March who now had been for two years her paramour in chief,—"Roger, do you give me the paper which I would not sign."

The Earl of March had drawn an audible breath. The Bishop of London somewhat wrinkled his shaggy brows, like a person in shrewd and epicurean amusement, while the Queen subscribed the parchment, with a large, scrawling flourish.

"Take, in the Devil's name, the hire of your dexterities," said Ysabeau. She pushed this document with her wet pen point toward March. "So! get it over with, that necessary business with my husband at Berkeley! And do the rest of you withdraw, saving only my prisoner."

Her orders were obeyed. Queen Ysabeau lolled in her tall carven chair, considering the comely gentleman who stood before her, fettered, at the point of shameful death. There was in the room a

little dog which had come to the Queen, and now licked the palm of her left hand, and the soft lapping of its tongue was the only sound you heard.

"So at plain peril of your life you rode toward Ordish. Love is a ruthless master."

The tense man had flushed. "You have harried us of the King's party out of England,—and in reason I might not leave England without seeing the desire of my heart."

"My friend," said Ysabeau, as if half in sorrow, "I would have pardoned much. That I shall not pardon."

She rose. Her face was dark and hot. "By God and all His saints! you shall indeed leave England to-morrow and the world also! but not without one final glimpse of this slut. I, too, will ride with you to Ordish,—as your sister, say—Gregory, did I not hang, last April, the husband of your sister? Yes, Ralph de Belomys, a thin man with eager eyes, the Earl of Farrington he was. As his widow I will ride with you to Ordish, upon condition that you disclose to none at Ordish, saving only, if you will, to this fine desire of Gregory Darrell's so steadfast heart, any word of the Queen's holiday. And to-morrow (you will swear according to the nicest obligations of honor) you must ride back with me to encounter—that which I may devise. For I dare to trust your naked word in this, and, moreover, I shall take with me a sufficiency of retainers to leave you no choice."

Darrell knelt before her. "I can do no homage to Queen Ysabeau; yet the prodigal hands of her who knows that I must die to-morrow, and who cunningly contrives, for old time's sake, to hearten me with a sight of Rosamund, I cannot but kiss." This much he did. "And I swear in all things to obey your will."

"O comely fool!" the Queen said, not ungently, "I contrive, it may be, but to demonstrate that many tyrants of antiquity were only bunglers. And, besides, I must have other thoughts than those which I have known too long. I must this night take holiday from thinking them, lest I go mad."

Thus did the Queen arrange her holiday.

"Either I mean to torture you to-morrow," Dame Ysabeau said, presently, to Darrell, as these two rode side by side, "or else I mean to free you. In sober verity I do not know. I am in a holi-

day humor, and it is as the whim may take me. But do you indeed love this Rosamund Eastney? And does she very humbly worship you?"

"It is my belief, madame, that when I see her I tremble visibly, and my weakness is such that a child has more intelligence than I,—and toward such misery any lady must in common reason be a little compassionate."

The Queen answered: "There is at least one lady who regards it without any compassion whatever. Decidedly, I must torture you. Yes, I must perfect for you some very exquisite torture, for you have forgotten too many things. Moreover, it was as Le Desir du Cuer, was it not, my Gregory, that your verses were wont to address me, just as nowadays this Rosamund is the desire of your heart. You lack inventiveness."

His palms clutched at heaven. "There was a maiden once in France, madame, whom my loyal heart desires eternally. But that younger Ysabeau is dead! and all true joy is destroyed, and the world lies under a blight from which God has averted an unfriendly face in displeasure! yet of all wretched persons existent I am he who endures the most grievous anguish, for daily I partake of life without any relish, and there are moments, madame, when I would in truth deem him austerely kind who slew me, now that this younger Ysabeau is dead."

She shrugged wearily. "I scent the raw stuff of a planh," the Queen observed; *"benedicite!* it was ever your way, my friend, to love a woman chiefly for the verses she inspired."

The Queen began to sing, as they rode through Baverstock Thicket.

Sang Ysabeau:

"Man's love hath many prompters,
But a woman's love hath none;
And he may woo a nimble wit
Or hair that shames the sun,
Whilst she must pick of all one man
And ever brood thereon—
And for no reason,
And not rightly,—

"Save that the plan was foreordained
(More old than Chalcedon,
Or any tower of Tarshish
Or of gleaming Babylon),
That she must love unwillingly
And love till life be done,—
He for a season,
And more lightly."

So to Ordish in that twilight came the Countess of Farrington, with a retinue of twenty men-at-arms, and her brother Sir Gregory Darrell. Lord Berners received the party with hospitality, and became astonishingly gallant.

"Age has not blinded my father to the fact that your sister is a very handsome woman," was Rosamund Eastney's comment. The period appears to have been after supper, and the girl sat with Gregory Darrell in not the most brilliant corner of the main hall.

The wretched man leaned forward, bit his nether lip, and then with a tumbling rush of speech told of the sorry masquerade. "The she-devil designs some horrible and obscure mischief, she plans I do not know what."

"Yet I—" said Rosamund. The girl had risen, and she continued with an odd inconsequence, "You have told me you were Pembroke's squire when long ago he sailed for France to fetch this woman into England—"

"—Which you never heard!" Lord Berners shouted at this point. "Jasper, a lute!" And then he halloaed, "Gregory, Madame de Farrington demands that racy song which you made against Queen Ysabeau during your last visit."

Thus did the Queen begin her holiday.

It was a handsome couple that came forward, with hand quitting hand tardily, and with blinking eyes yet rapt. These two were not overpleased at being disturbed, and the man was troubled, as in reason he well might be, by the task assigned him.

"Is it, indeed, your will, my sister," he said, "that I should sing—this song?"

"It is my will," the Countess said.

And the knight flung back his comely head and laughed. "A

truth, once spoken, may not be disowned in any company. It is not, look you, of my own choice that I sing, my sister. Yet if Queen Ysabeau herself were to bid me sing this song, I could not refuse to be thus ungallant, for, Christ aid me! the song is true."

Sang Sir Gregory:

"Dame Ysabeau, la prophécie
Qui li sage dit ne ment mie,
Que la royne sut ceus grever
Qui tantost laquais sot aymer—"[1]

and so on. It was a lengthy ditty, and in its wording not oversqueamish; the Queen's career in England was detailed without any stuttering, and you would have found the catalogue unhandsome. Yet Sir Gregory delivered it with an incisive gusto, desperately countersigning his own death-warrant. Her treacheries, her addiction to paramours and strong drink, and the assassinations which she had contrived, were all rendered in the most glowing terms, whose vigor seemed, even now, to please their contriver.

Now, when Darrell had ended, the Countess of Farrington, without speaking, swept her left hand toward her cheek and by pure chance caught between thumb and forefinger the autumn-numbed fly that had annoyed her. She drew the little dagger from her girdle and meditatively cut the buzzing thing in two. She cast the fragments from her, and resting the dagger's point upon the arm of her chair, with one forefinger upon the summit of the hilt, she considerately twirled the glittering knife.

"This song does not err upon the side of clemency," she said, at last, "nor by ordinary does Queen Ysabeau."

"That she-wolf!" said Lord Berners, comfortably. "Hoo, Madame Gertrude! since the Prophet Moses wrung healing waters from a rock there has been no such miracle recorded."

"We read, Messire de Berners, that when the she-wolf once acknowledges a master she will follow him as faithfully as any dog. My brother, I do not question your sincerity, yet everybody knows you sing with the voice of an unhonored courtier. What if Queen Ysabeau had heard your song all through, as I have heard it, and

[1] Nicolas gives this ballad in full, but, for obvious reasons, his translator would prefer to do otherwise.

then had said,—for she is not as the run of women,—'Messire, I had thought until this that there was no thorough man in England save tall Roger Mortimer. I find him tawdry now, and—I remember. Come you, then, and rule the England that you love as you may love no woman, and rule me, messire, since I find even in your insolence that which is not displeasing—'" She had paused. She shrugged. "What if Queen Ysabeau, who is not as the run of women, had said this much, my brother?"

Darrell had put by the lute, and his hands were clenched. He said now:

"I would answer, my sister, that as she has found in England but one man, I have found in England but one woman,—the rose of all the world." His eyes were turned toward Rosamund Eastney. "And yet," the man continued, "because I, too, remember—"

"Hah, in God's name! I am answered," the Countess said. She rose. "We have ridden far to-day, and to-morrow we must travel a great deal farther,—eh, my brother? I am going to bed, Messire de Berners."

So the men and women parted. Madame de Farrington kissed her brother at leaving him, as was most natural; and the Queen went away singing hushedly.

Sang Ysabeau:

"Were the All-Mother wise, life (shaped anotherwise)
Would be all high and true;
Could I be otherwise I had been otherwise
Simply because of you, . . .
With whom I have naught to do,
And who are no longer you!

"Life with its pay to be bade us essay to be
What we became,—I believe
Were there a way to be what it was play to be
I would not greatly grieve . . .
Hearts are not worn on the sleeve.
Let us neither laugh nor grieve!"

Ysabeau would have slept that night within the chamber of Rosamund Eastney had either slept. As concerns the older of the

pair, I say nothing. The girl, though soon aware of frequent rustlings near at hand, lay quiet, half forgetful of the poisonous woman yonder. The girl was now fulfilled with a great blaze of exultation: to-morrow Gregory must die, and then perhaps she might find time for tears. Meanwhile, before her eyes, the man had flung away a kingdom and life itself for love of her, and the least nook of her heart ached to be a shade more worthy of the sacrifice.

After it might have been an hour of this excruciate ecstasy the Countess came to Rosamund's bed. "Ay," the woman began, "it is indisputable that his hair is like spun gold and that his eyes resemble sun-drenched waters in June. It is certain that when this Gregory laughs God is more happy. Girl, I was familiar with the routine of your meditations before you were born."

Rosamund said, quite simply: "You have known him always. I envy the circumstance, Madame Gertrude,—you alone of all women in the world I envy, since you, his sister, being so much older, must have known him always."

"I know him to the core, my girl," the Countess answered. For a while she sat silent, one bare foot jogging restlessly. "Yet I am two years his junior— Did you hear nothing, Rosamund?"

"No, Madame Gertrude, I heard nothing."

"Nevertheless," the Countess said, "let us have lights, since I can no longer endure this overpopulous twilight." She kindled three lamps. "It is as yet dark yonder, where the shadows quiver very oddly, as though they would rise from the floor,—do they not, my girl?—and would protest vain things. But, Rosamund, it has been done; in the moment of death men's souls have traveled farther and have been visible; it has been done, I tell you. And he would stand before me, with pleading eyes, and he would reproach me in a voice too faint to reach my ears,—but I would see him,—and his groping hands would clutch at my hands, as though a dropped veil had touched me; and at that touch I shall be going mad!"

"Now can it be that you talk of your dead husband, Madame Gertrude?"

"Poor innocent fool!" the woman said, "I am Ysabeau of France." And when Rosamund made as though to rise, in alarm, Queen Ysabeau caught her by the shoulder. "Do you bear witness when he comes that I never hated him. Yet for my quiet it was

necessary that his scented, pampered body should suffer cruelly, and not any mark be left upon it. So even now he suffers! But I have lied. I hate the man, in such a fashion as you will comprehend when you are Sarum's wife."

"Madame and Queen!" the girl said, "you will not murder me!"

"I am tempted!" the Queen answered. "O little slip of girlhood, I am tempted, for it is not reasonable you should possess everything that I have lost. Innocence you have, and youth, and untroubled eyes, and quiet dreams, and the fond graveness of a child, and Gregory Darrell's love—" Now Ysabeau sat down upon the bed, and she caught up the girl's face between two fevered hands. "Rosamund, this Darrell perceives within this moment, as I perceive within this moment, that the love he bears for you is but what he remembers of the love he bore a certain maid long dead. Eh, you might have been her sister, Rosamund, for you are very like her. And she, poor wench,—why, I could see her now, I think, were my eyes not blurred, somehow, almost as though Queen Ysabeau might weep! But she was handsomer than you will ever be, my Rosamund, because your complexion is not anything to boast about, praise God!"

"Gregory has told me of his intercourse with you," the girl replied, and this was a lie flat-footed. "Nay, do you kill me if you will, madame, since you are the stronger, yet, with my dying breath, I will protest that Gregory has loved no woman truly in all his life except me."

The Queen laughed bitterly. "Do I not know men? He told you nothing. And to-night he hesitated, and to-morrow, at the lifting of my finger, he will supplicate. Since boyhood Gregory Darrell has loved me, O white, palsied innocence! He is mine at a whistle. And in that time to come he will desert you, Rosamund, —bidding you farewell with a pleasing canzon,—and they will give you to the gross Earl of Sarum, as they gave me to the painted man who yesterday was King of England. And in that time to come you will know your body to be your husband's makeshift when he lacks for his Gavestons and his De Spencers to play with him the games of Sodom. And in that time to come your heart will be a flame within you, my Rosamund, an ever insatiable flame! And in that time to come you will hate your God because He made

you, and you will hate Satan because in a desperate hour he tricked you, and you will hate all men because they scurry to obey your whims. But chiefly you will hate yourself because you are so pitiable: and devastation only will you love in that strange time which is to come. It is adjacent, my Rosamund."

The girl kept silence. She sat erect in the tumbled bed, her hands clasping her knees, and she appeared to deliberate what Dame Ysabeau had said. Plentiful brown hair fell about this Rosamund's face, which was white and shrewd.

"A part of what you say, madame, I understand. I know that Gregory Darrell loves me, yet I have long ago acknowledged that he loves me as one pets a child, or, let us say, a spaniel which reveres and amuses its master. I lack his wit, you comprehend, and so he never speaks to me all that he thinks. Yet a part of it he tells me, and he loves me, and with this I am content. Assuredly, if they give me to Sarum I shall hate Sarum even more than I detest him now. And then, I think, Heaven help me! that I would not very greatly grieve— But you are all evil!" Rosamund said; "and you thrust into my mind thoughts which I may not understand!"

"You will comprehend them," the Queen said, "when you know yourself a chattel, bought and paid for, with Heaven very resolutely denying you that help which other quarters proffer."

The Queen laughed. She rose, and her hands strained toward heaven. "You are omnipotent, yet have You let me become that into which I am changed!"

She began to speak as though a statue spoke through lips that seemed motionless. "Men have long urged me, Rosamund, to a deed which by one stroke would make me mistress of these islands. To-day I looked on Gregory Darrell, and knew that I was wise in love,—and I had but to crush a lewd, soft worm to come to him. Eh, and I was tempted—!"

The girl said: "Let us grant that Gregory loves you very greatly, and me just when his leisure serves. You may offer him a cushioned infamy, a colorful and brief delirium, and afterward demolishment of soul and body. I offer him contentment and a level life, made up of small events, it may be, and lacking both in abysses and in skyey heights. Yet is love a flame wherein the lover's soul must be purified; it is a flame which assays high queens just as it does

their servants: and thus, madame, to judge between us I dare summon you."

"Child, child!" the Queen said, tenderly, and with a smile, "you are brave; and in your fashion you are wise: yet you will never comprehend. But once I was in heart and soul and body all that you are to-day; and now I am Queen Ysabeau— Did you in truth hear nothing, Rosamund?"

"Why, nothing save the wind."

"That is a strange thing. For all the while that I have talked with you I have been seriously annoyed by shrieks and a man's pitiable wailing. But I, too, grow cowardly, it may be— Yet I know that by this time I am mistress of broad England, until my son—my own son, born of my body, and in glad anguish, Rosamund,—knows me for what I am. For I have heard shrieks and a man's pitiable long wailing, as, with red irons, others played that game in which he once delighted."

"Madame Ysabeau—!" the girl answered vaguely, for she was puzzled and was almost frightened by the other's strange talk.

"So let us now get back to bed!" said Ysabeau; "and let us put out the lights lest he come presently. Or perhaps he fears me, now, too much to come to-night. Yet the night approaches, none the less, when I shall lift some arras, or it may be I shall unclose some door, to find him there, in the dark, within arm's reach, chalk-white, with painted cheeks, and smiling very terribly,—or perhaps I shall look into some mirror and behold there not myself but him, —and in that instant I shall die. Meantime I rule, until my son attains his manhood. Eh, Rosamund, my only son was once so tiny, and so helpless, and his little crimson mouth groped toward me, helplessly, and save in Bethlehem, I thought, there was never any child more fair— But I must forget all that, for even now my son plots against me. God orders matters very shrewdly, my Rosamund."

Timidly the girl touched Ysabeau's shoulder. "In part, I understand, madame and Queen."

"You understand nothing," said Ysabeau. "How should you understand, whose breasts are yet so tiny? So let us put out the light! though I dread darkness. They say that hell is very poorly lighted. God has thought of that also."

Then Queen Ysabeau shrugged. Pensively she blew out each lamp.

"We know this Gregory Darrell," the Queen said in the darkness, "ah, to the marrow we know him, howsoever steadfastly we blink, and we know the present turmoil of his soul. And in common-sense what chance have you of retaining this handsome weakling?"

"None in common-sense, madame; and yet you go too fast. For man is a being of mingled nature, we are told by those in holy orders, and his life here is an unending warfare between that which is divine in him and that which is frail and bestial, while impartial Heaven attends as arbiter of the tourney. Always a man's judgment misleads him, and his faculties allure him to a truce, howsoever brief, with iniquity. His senses raise a mist about his goings, and there is not an endowment of the man but in the end plays traitor to his interest, as of God's wisdom God intends: so that when the man is overthrown, the Eternal Father may, in reason, be neither vexed nor grieved if only the man takes heart to rise again. And when, betrayed and impotent, the man elects to fight out the allotted battle, defiant of common-sense and of the counsellors which God Himself accorded, I think that the Saints hold festival in heaven."

"An excellent sermon!" said the Queen. "Yet I do not think that our Gregory could very long endure a wife given over to any such high-minded talking. He prefers to hear himself do the fine talking."

There followed a long silence, disturbed only by purposeless September winds; but I believe that neither of these two women slept with profundity.

About dawn one of the Queen's attendants roused Sir Gregory Darrell and conducted him into the hedged garden of Ordish, where Ysabeau walked in tranquil converse with Lord Berners. The old man was in high good humor.

"My lad," said he, and he clapped Sir Gregory upon the shoulder, "you have, I do protest, the very phœnix of sisters. I was never happier."

Then Lord Berners went away chuckling.

The Queen said, "We ride for Blackfriars now."

Darrell responded, "I am content, but I ask leave to speak, howsoever briefly, with Dame Rosamund before I die."

Then the woman came more near to him. "I am not used to beg, but within this hour you encounter death, and I have loved no man in all my life saving only you, Gregory Darrell. Nor have you loved any person as you loved me once in France. Oh, to-day, I may speak freely, for with you the doings of that boy and girl are matters overpast. Yet were it otherwise—eh, do you weigh this matter carefully! for I am mistress of England now, and England would I give you, and such love as that slim, white innocence has never dreamed of would I give you, Gregory Darrell—"

Then the Queen clapped one hand upon his lips.

She very quickly said: "I spoke to tempt you. But you saw, and you saw clearly, that it was the sickly whim of a wanton, and you did not think of yielding, for you love this Rosamund Eastney, and you know me to be vile. Then, have a care of me! The strange woman am I, of whom we read that her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death. Hoh, many strong men have been slain by me, and in the gray time to come will many others be slain by me, it may be; but never you among them, my Gregory, who are more wary, and more merciful, and who know that I have need to lay aside at least one comfortable thought against eternity."

"I concede you to have been unwise—" he hoarsely began.

About them fell the dying leaves, of many glorious colors, but the air of this new day seemed raw and chill.

Then Rosamund came through the opening in the hedge. "Now, do you choose," she said. "The woman offers life and high place and wealth, and, it may be, a greater love than I am capable of giving you. I offer a dishonorable death within the moment."

And again, with that peculiar and imperious gesture, the man flung back his head, and he laughed. Said Gregory Darrell:

"I am I! and I will so to live that I may face without shame not only God, but also my own scrutiny."

He wheeled upon the Queen, and he spoke henceforward very leisurely.

"I love you; all my life long I am condemned to love you, Ysabeau, no matter what I may prefer: and you, too, dear Rosamund, I love, with a great difference. And I desire the power that you

would give me, Ysabeau, and I desire the good which I would do with that power in the England which I or blustering Roger Mortimer must rule, through edicts issued from your bedchamber; and I desire also to be the man that I would be if I were able now to choose death without any debate."

Then Gregory Darrell said: "And I think of the man you would make of me, my Rosamund. . . . The man! And what is this man, this Gregory Darrell, that his welfare should be considered?—an ape who chatters to himself of kinship with the archangels while filthily he digs for groundnuts! This much I know, at bottom. . . . Yet more clearly do I perceive that this same man, like all his fellows, is a maimed god who walks the world dependent upon many wise and evil counsellors. He must measure, to a hair's-breadth, every content of the world by means of a bloodied sponge, tucked somewhere in his skull, a sponge which is ungeared by the first cup of wine and ruined by the touch of his own finger. He must appraise all that he judges with no better instruments than two bits of colored jelly, with a bungling makeshift so fallible that the nearest horologer's apprentice could have devised a more accurate device. In fine, each man is under penalty condemned to compute eternity with false weights, to estimate infinity with a yardstick: and he very often does it. Thereafter, to defend these computations, he chooses his own death without any debate."

And Gregory Darrell said also: "For, though, 'If then I do that which I would not I consent unto the law,' saith even an Apostle; yet a braver pagan answers him, 'Perceive at last that thou hast in thee something better and more divine than the things which cause the various effects and, as it were, pull thee by the strings.' There lies the choice which every man must face,—whether rationally, as his reason goes, to accept his own limitations and make the best of his allotted prison yard? or stupendously to play the fool and swear even to himself (while his own judgment shrieks and proves a flat denial), that he is at will omnipotent? and that he, who is divinely born, has in this prison yard to uphold his Father's private honor. Well, you have chosen long ago, my poor proud Ysabeau; and I choose now, and differently: for poltroon that I am! being now in a cold drench of terror, I steadfastly protest I am not very much afraid, and I choose death without any more debate."

It was toward Rosamund that the Queen looked. "Should Queen Ysabeau be angry or vexed or very cruel now, my Rosamund? for at bottom she is glad."

And the Queen said also: "I give you back your plighted word. I ride homeward to my husks, but you remain. Or, rather, the Countess of Farrington departs for the convent of Ambresbury, disconsolate in her widowhood and desirous to have done with worldly affairs. It is most natural she should relinquish to her beloved and only brother all her dower-lands,—or so at least Messire de Berners acknowledges. Here, then, is the grant, my Gregory, that conveys to you those lands of Ralph de Belomys' which last year I confiscated. And this tedious Messire de Berners is now eager to have you for a son-in-law."

About them fell the dying leaves, of many glorious colors, but the air of this new day seemed raw and chill, in the while that Dame Ysabeau took Sir Gregory's hand and laid it upon the hand of Rosamund Eastney. "Our paladin is, in the outcome, a mortal man, and therefore I do not altogether envy you. Yet he has his moments, and you are capable. Serve, then, not only his desires but mine also, dear Rosamund!"

There was a silence. The girl spoke as though her answer were a sacrament. "I will do that, madame and Queen."

Thus did the Queen end her holiday.

A little later the Countess of Farrington rode from Ordish with all her train save one; and riding from that place, where love was, she sang very softly.

Sang Ysabeau:

"As with her dupes dealt Circe
Life deals with hers, for she
Reshapes them without mercy,
And shapes them swinishly,
To wallow swinishly,
And for eternity;

"Though, harder than the witch was,
Life, changing not the whole,
Transmutes the body, which was

Proud garment of the soul,
And briefly drugs the soul,
Whose ruin is her goal;

"And means by this thereafter
A subtler mirth to get,
And mock with bitterer laughter
Her helpless dupes' regret,
Their swinish dull regret
For what they half forget."

And within the hour came Hubert Frayne to Ordish, riding on a foam-specked horse, as he went about those parts to announce to the King's men the King's barbaric murder overnight, at Berkeley Castle, by Queen Ysabeau's order.

"Ride southward," said Lord Berners, and he panted as they buckled on his disused armor; "but harkee, Frayne! if you pass the Countess of Farrington's company, do you speak no syllable of this news! It is not convenient that a lady so thoroughly and so praiseworthily intent upon holy matters—but, Lord, how I have fattened!— No, it is not right that this dear lady should have her salutary meditations disturbed by any such unsettling tidings. Hey, son-in-law?"

Sir Gregory Darrell laughed, very bitterly. "He that is without blemish among you—" he said.

Then they armed completely, and went forth to battle against the murderous harlot.

FROM

Jurgen

WHY JURGEN DID THE MANLY THING

ASSUMPTION OF A NOTED GARMENT

THE GARDEN BETWEEN DAWN AND SUNRISE

THE DOROTHY WHO DID NOT UNDERSTAND

OF COMPROMISES IN LEUKÊ

CONCERNING HORVENDILE'S NONSENSE

ECONOMICS OF KING JURGEN

THE ASCENSION OF POPE JURGEN

OF COMPROMISES IN HEAVEN

THE *first four chapters of* Jurgen *introduce and start upon his amazing retroactive career the hero who seems to have been predestined, without extraneous interference or critical assistance, to hold first place among Cabell's many adventurers. We are ushered at once into "the garden between dawn and sunrise," which gives this Anthology its happy title—most happy, because in that timeless garden the whole of the many-dated and perversely chronologized dream of Cabell is born and forever abides. And we meet at once Dorothy la Désirée, the heroine, the main* motif, *next to Jurgen himself the principal character of the romance. She is indeed the theme and the inspiration and the object of all romantic quest, for whatever form she takes she is the first love, and the last and everlasting, of every lover and poet. The next three chapters here selected are the twenty-eighth to thirtieth, in which, after wide and devious journeyings, Jurgen again encounters his Dorothy in Helen of Troy, from whom every man's first love in some way derives in one of three forms: the poet's dream, here represented as Ettarre; the object of chivalrous adoration, Melicent; and the instigator of gallantry, Dorothy. Make what you can of Horvendile, the restless red-haired semi-obscure person with the anagrammatic name, who moves in and out of these romances, a wandering idealist without a country, perhaps the author himself in one of his disguises, playing poet, chorus and commentator. The last two chapters here selected are the fortieth and forty-first, the final frustrated play, in Heaven, with the idea of justice, in this Comedy of Justice, in which the respectable bourgeois pawnbroker ends by returning to common-sense. But Cabell cautions us against too much interpretation, even against his own shadowy elucidations.*

J. M.

WHY JURGEN DID THE MANLY THING

It is a tale which they narrate in Poictesme, saying: In the old days lived a pawnbroker named Jurgen; but what his wife called him was very often much worse than that. She was a high-spirited woman, with no especial gift for silence. Her name, they say, was Adelais, but people by ordinary called her Dame Lisa.

They tell, also, that in the old days, after putting up the shop-windows for the night, Jurgen was passing the Cistercian Abbey, on his way home: and one of the monks had tripped over a stone in the roadway. He was cursing the devil who had placed it there.

"Fie, brother!" says Jurgen, "and have not the devils enough to bear as it is?"

"I never held with Origen," replied the monk; "and, besides, it hurt my great-toe confoundedly."

"None the less," observes Jurgen, "it does not behoove God-fearing persons to speak with disrespect of the divinely appointed Prince of Darkness. To your further confusion, consider this monarch's industry! day and night you may detect him toiling at the task Heaven set him. That is a thing can be said of few communicants and of no monks. Think, too, of his fine artistry, as evidenced in all the perilous and lovely snares of this world, which it is your business to combat, and mine to lend money upon. Why, but for him we would both be vocationless! Then, too, consider his philanthropy! and deliberate how insufferable would be our case if you and I, and all our fellow parishioners, were to-day hob-nobbing with other beasts in the Garden which we pretend to desiderate on Sundays! To arise with swine and lie down with the hyena?—oh, intolerable!"

Thus he ran on, devising reasons for not thinking too harshly of the Devil. Most of it was an abridgement of some verses Jurgen had composed, in the shop when business was slack.

"I consider that to be stuff and nonsense," was the monk's glose.

"No doubt your notion is sensible," observed the pawnbroker: "but mine is the prettier."

Then Jurgen passed the Cistercian Abbey, and was approaching Bellegarde, when he met a black gentleman, who saluted him and said, "Thanks, Jurgen, for your good word!"

"Who are you, and why do you thank me?" asks Jurgen.

"My name is no great matter. But you have a kind heart, Jurgen. May your life be free from care!"

"Save us from hurt and harm, friend, but I am already married."

"Eh, sirs, and a fine clever poet like you!"

"Yet it is a long while now since I was a practising poet."

"Why, to be sure! You have the artistic temperament, which is not exactly suited to the restrictions of domestic life. Then I suppose your wife has her own personal opinion about poetry, Jurgen."

"Indeed, sir, her opinion would not bear repetition, for I am sure you are unaccustomed to such language."

"This is very sad. I am afraid your wife does not quite understand you, Jurgen."

"Sir," says Jurgen, astounded, "do you read people's inmost thoughts?"

The black gentleman seemed much dejected. He pursed his lips, and fell to counting upon his fingers: and, as they moved, his sharp nails glittered like flame-points.

"Now but this is a very deplorable thing," says the black gentleman, "to have befallen the first person I have found ready to speak a kind word for evil. And in all these centuries, too! Dear me, this is a most regrettable instance of mismanagement! No matter, Jurgen, the morning is brighter than the evening. How I will reward you, to be sure!"

So Jurgen thanked the simple old creature politely. And when Jurgen reached home his wife was nowhere to be seen. He looked on all sides and questioned everyone, but to no avail. Dame Lisa had vanished in the midst of getting supper ready,—suddenly, completely and inexplicably, just as (in Jurgen's figure) a windstorm passes and leaves behind it a tranquillity which seems, by contrast, uncanny. Nothing could explain the mystery, short of

magic: and Jurgen on a sudden recollected the black gentleman's queer promise. Jurgen crossed himself, with complacent piety.

"How unjustly now," says Jurgen, "do some people get an ill name for gratitude! And now do I perceive how wise I am, always to speak pleasantly of everybody, in this world of tale-bearers."

Then Jurgen prepared his own supper, went to bed, and slept soundly.

"I have implicit confidence," says he, "in Lisa. I have particular confidence in her ability to take care of herself in any surroundings."

That was all very well: but time passed, and presently it began to be rumoured that Dame Lisa walked on Morven. Her half-brother, who was a grocer and a member of the town-council of Aigremont, went thither to see about this report. And sure enough, there was Jurgen's wife walking in the twilight and muttering incessantly.

"Fie, Sister!" says the town-councillor, "this is very unseemly conduct for a married woman, and a thing likely to be talked about."

"Follow me!" replied Dame Lisa. And the town-councillor followed her a little way in the dusk, but when she came to Amneran Heath and still went onward, he knew better than to follow.

Next evening the half-sister of Dame Lisa went to Morven. This sister had married a notary, and was a shrewd woman. In consequence, she took with her this evening a long wand of peeled willow-wood. And there was Jurgen's wife walking in the twilight and muttering incessantly.

"Fie, Sister!" says the notary's wife, who was a shrewd woman, "and do you not know that all this while Jurgen does his own sewing, and is once more making eyes at Countess Dorothy?"

Dame Lisa shuddered; but she only said, "Follow me!"

And the notary's wife followed her to Amneran Heath, and across the heath, to where a cave was. This was a place of abominable repute. A lean hound came to meet them there in the twilight, lolling his tongue: but the notary's wife struck thrice with her wand, and the silent beast left them. And Dame Lisa passed silently into the cave, and her sister turned and went home to the notary's children, weeping.

So the next evening Jurgen himself came to Morven, because all his wife's family assured him this was the manly thing to do. Jurgen left his shop to the charge of Urien Villemarche, who was a highly efficient clerk. Jurgen followed his wife across Amneran Heath until they reached the cave. Jurgen would willingly have been elsewhere.

For the hound squatted upon his haunches, and seemed to grin at Jurgen: and there were other creatures abroad, that flew low in the twilight, keeping close to the ground like owls; but they were larger than owls and were more discomforting. And, moreover, all this was just after sunset upon Walburga's Eve, when almost anything is rather more than likely to happen.

Jurgen said, a little peevishly: "Lisa, my dear, if you go into that cave I shall have to follow you, because it is the manly thing to do. And you know how easily I take cold."

The voice of Dame Lisa, now, was thin and wailing, a curiously changed voice. "There is a cross about your neck. You must throw that away."

Jurgen was wearing such a cross, through motives of sentiment, because it had once belonged to his dead mother. But now, to pleasure his wife, he removed the trinket, and hung it on a barberry bush; and, with the reflection that this was likely to prove a deplorable business, he followed Dame Lisa into the cave.

ASSUMPTION OF A NOTED GARMENT

The tale tells that all was dark there, and Jurgen could see no one. But the cave stretched straight forward, and downward, and at the far end was a glow of light. Jurgen went on and on, and so came presently to a centaur: and this surprised Jurgen not a little, because he knew that centaurs were imaginary creatures.

Certainly they were curious to look at: for here was the body of a fine bay horse, and, rising from its shoulders, the sun-burnt body of a young fellow who regarded Jurgen with grave and not unfriendly eyes. The Centaur was lying beside a fire of cedar and juniper wood: near him was a platter containing a liquid with which he was anointing his hoofs. This stuff, as the Centaur rubbed it in with his fingers, turned the appearance of his hoofs to gold.

"Hail, friend," says Jurgen, "if you be the work of God."

"Your protasis is not good Greek," observed the Centaur, "because in Hellas we did not make such reservations. Besides, it is not so much my origin as my destination which concerns you."

"Well, friend, and whither are you going?"

"To the garden between dawn and sunrise, Jurgen."

"Surely, now, but that is a fine name for a garden! and it is a place I would delight to be seeing."

"Up upon my back, Jurgen, and I will take you thither," says the Centaur, and heaved to his feet. Then said the Centaur, when the pawnbroker hesitated: "Because, as you must understand, there is no other way. For this garden does not exist, and never did exist, in what men humorously called real life; so that of course only imaginary creatures such as I can enter it."

"That sounds very reasonable," Jurgen estimated: "but, as it happens, I am looking for my wife, whom I suspect to have been carried off by a devil, poor fellow!"

And Jurgen began to explain to the Centaur what had befallen.

The Centaur laughed. "It may be for that reason I am here. There is, in any event, only one remedy in this matter. Above all devils—and above all gods, they tell me, but certainly above all centaurs,—is the power of Koshchei the Deathless, who made things as they are."

"It is not always wholesome," Jurgen submitted, "to speak of Koshchei. It seems especially undesirable in a dark place like this."

"None the less, I suspect it is to him you must go for justice."

"I would prefer not doing that," said Jurgen, with unaffected candor.

"You have my sympathy: but there is no question of preference where Koshchei is concerned. Do you think, for example, that I am frowzing in this underground place by my own choice? and knew your name by accident?"

The pawnbroker now was frightened, a little. "Well, well! but it is usually the deuce and all, this doing of the manly thing. How, then, can I come to Koshchei?"

"Roundabout," says the Centaur. "There is never any other way."

"And is the road to this garden roundabout?"

"Oh, very much so, inasmuch as it circumvents both destiny and common-sense."

"Needs must, then," says Jurgen: "at all events, I am willing to taste any drink once."

"You will be chilled, though, travelling as you are. For you and I are going a queer way, in search of justice, over the grave of a dream and through the malice of time. So you had best put on this shirt above your other clothing."

"Indeed it is a fine snug shining garment, with curious figures on it. I accept such raiment gladly. And whom shall I be thanking for his kindness, now?"

"My name," said the Centaur, "is Nessus."

"Well, then, friend Nessus, I am at your service."

And in a trice Jurgen was on the Centaur's back, and the two of them had somehow come out of the cave, and were crossing Amneran Heath. So they passed into a wooded place, where the light of sunset yet lingered, rather unaccountably. Now the Centaur went westward. And now about the pawnbroker's shoulders and

upon his breast and over his lean arms glittered like a rainbow the many-colored shirt of Nessus.

For a while they went through the woods, which were composed of big trees standing a goodish distance from one another, with the Centaur's gilded hoofs rustling and sinking in a thick carpet of dead leaves, all gray and brown, in level stretches that were unbroken by any undergrowth. And then they came to a white roadway that extended due west, and so were done with the woods. Now happened an incredible thing in which Jurgen would never have believed had he not seen it with his own eyes: for now the Centaur went so fast that he gained a little by a little upon the sun, thus causing it to rise in the west a little by a little; and these two sped westward in the glory of a departed sunset. The sun fell full in Jurgen's face as he rode straight toward the west, so that he blinked and closed his eyes, and looked first toward this side, then the other. Thus it was that the country about him, and the persons they were passing, were seen by him in quick bright flashes, like pictures suddenly transmuted into other pictures; and all his memories of this shining highway were, in consequence, always confused and incoherent.

He wondered that there seemed to be so many young women along the road to the garden. Here was a slim girl in white teasing a great brown and yellow dog that leaped about her clumsily; here a girl sat in the branches of a twisted and gnarled tree, and back of her was a broad muddied river, copper-colored in the sun; and here shone the fair head of a tall girl on horseback, who seemed to wait for some one: in fine, the girls along the way were numberless, and Jurgen thought he recollected one or two of them.

But the Centaur went so swiftly that Jurgen could not be sure.

THE GARDEN BETWEEN DAWN AND SUNRISE

THUS it was that Jurgen and the Centaur came to the garden between dawn and sunrise, entering this place in a fashion which it is not convenient to record. But as they passed over the bridge three fled before them, screaming. And when the life had been trampled out of the small furry bodies which these three had misused, there was none to oppose the Centaur's entry into the garden between dawn and sunrise.

This was a wonderful garden: yet nothing therein was strange. Instead, it seemed that everything hereabouts was heart-breakingly familiar and very dear to Jurgen. For he had come to a broad lawn which slanted northward to a well-remembered brook: and multitudinous maples, and locust-trees stood here and there, irregularly, and were being toyed with, rather lazily, by an irresolute west wind, so that foliage seemed to toss and ripple everywhere, like green spray: but autumn was at hand, for the locust-trees were dropping a Danaë's shower of small round yellow leaves. Around the garden was an unforgotten circle of blue hills. And this was a place of lucent twilight, unlit by either sun or stars, and with no shadows anywhere in the diffused faint radiancy that revealed this garden, which is not visible to any man except in the brief interval between dawn and sunrise.

"Why, but it is Count Emmerick's garden at Storisende," says Jurgen, "where I used to be having such fine times when I was a lad."

"I will wager," said Nessus, "that you did not use to walk alone in this garden."

"Well, no; there was a girl."

"Just so," assented Nessus. "It is a local by-law: and here are those who comply with it."

For now had come toward them, walking together in the dawn,

a handsome boy and a girl. This girl was incredibly beautiful, because everybody in the garden saw her with the vision of the boy who was with this girl.

"I am Rudolph," said the boy, "and she is Anne."

"And are you happy here?" asked Jurgen.

"Oh, yes, sir, we are tolerably happy: but Anne's father is very rich, and my mother is poor, so that we cannot be quite happy until I have gone into foreign lands and come back with a great many lakhs of rupees and pieces of eight."

"And what will you do with all this money, Rudolph?"

"My duty, sir, as I see it. But I inherit defective eyesight."

"Godspeed to you, Rudolph!" said Jurgen, "for many others are in your plight."

Then came to Jurgen and the Centaur another boy with the small blue-eyed person in whom he took delight. And this fat and indolent looking boy informed them that he and the girl who was with him were walking in the glaze of the red mustard jar, which Jurgen thought was gibberish: and the fat boy said that he and the girl had decided never to grow any older, which Jurgen said was excellent good sense if only they could manage it.

"Oh, I can manage that," said this fat boy, reflectively, "if only I do not find the managing of it uncomfortable."

Jurgen for a moment regarded him, and then gravely shook hands.

"I feel for you," said Jurgen, "for I perceive that you, too, are a monstrous clever fellow: so life will get the best of you."

"But is not cleverness the main thing, sir?"

"Time will show you, my lad," says Jurgen, a little sorrowfully. "And Godspeed to you, for many others are in your plight."

And a host of boys and girls did Jurgen see in the garden. And all the faces that Jurgen saw were young and glad and very lovely and quite heart-breakingly confident, as young persons beyond numbering came toward Jurgen and passed him there, in the first glow of dawn: so they all went exulting in the glory of their youth, and foreknowing life to be a puny antagonist from whom one might take very easily anything which one desired. And all passed in couples,—"as though they came from the Ark," said Jurgen. But the Centaur said they followed a precedent which was far older than the Ark.

"For in this garden," said the Centaur, "each man that ever lived has sojourned for a little while, with no company save his illusions. I must tell you again that in this garden are encountered none but imaginary creatures. And stalwart persons take their hour of recreation here, and go hence unaccompanied, to become aldermen and respected merchants and bishops, and to be admired as captains upon prancing horses, or even as kings upon tall thrones; each in his station thinking not at all of the garden ever any more. But now and then come timid persons, Jurgen, who fear to leave this garden without an escort: so these must need go hence with one or another imaginary creature to guide them,—and to guide them always about alleys and bypaths, because imaginary creatures can find little nourishment in the public highways, and shun them. Thus must these timid persons skulk about obscurely with their diffident and skittish guides, and they do not ever venture willingly into the thronged places where men get horses and build thrones."

"And what becomes of these timid persons, Centaur?"

"Why, sometimes they spoil paper, Jurgen, and sometimes they spoil human lives."

"Then are these accursed persons," Jurgen considered.

"You should know best," replied the Centaur.

"Oh, very probably," said Jurgen. "Meanwhile here is one who walks alone in this garden, and I wonder to see the local by-laws thus violated."

Now Nessus looked at Jurgen for a while without speaking: and in the eyes of the Centaur was so much of comprehension and compassion that it troubled Jurgen. For somehow it made Jurgen fidget, and consider this an unpleasantly personal way of looking at anybody.

"Yes, certainly," said the Centaur, "this woman walks alone. Yet there is no help for her loneliness, because the lad who loved this woman is dead."

"Nessus, I am willing to be reasonably sorry about it. Still, is there any need of pulling quite such a portentously long face? After all, a great many other persons have died, off and on: and for anything I can say to the contrary, this particular young fellow may have been no especial loss to anybody."

Again the Centaur said, "You should know best."

THE DOROTHY WHO DID NOT UNDERSTAND

For now had come to Jurgen and the Centaur a gold-haired woman, clothed all in white, and walking alone. She was tall, and lovely and tender to regard: and hers was not the red and white comeliness of many ladies that were famed for beauty, but rather it had the even glow of ivory. Her nose was large and high in the bridge, her flexible mouth was not of the smallest: and yet, whatever other persons might have said, to Jurgen this woman's countenance was in all things perfect. Perhaps this was because he never saw her as she was. For certainly the color of her eyes stayed a matter never revealed to him: gray, blue or green, there was no saying: they varied as does the sea; but always these eyes were lovely and friendly and perturbing.

Jurgen remembered that: for Jurgen saw this was Count Emmerick's second sister, Dorothy la Désirée, whom Jurgen very long ago (a many years before he met Dame Lisa and set up in business as a pawnbroker) had hymned in innumerable verses as Heart's Desire.

"And this is the only woman whom I ever loved," Jurgen remembered, upon a sudden. For people cannot always be thinking of these matters.

So he saluted her, with such deference as is due to a countess from a tradesman, and yet with unforgotten tremors waking in his staid body. But the strangest was yet to be seen, for he noted now that this was not a handsome woman in middle life but a young girl.

"I do not understand," he said, aloud: "for you are Dorothy. And yet it seems to me that you are not the Countess Dorothy who is Heitman Michael's wife."

And the girl tossed her fair head, with that careless lovely ges-

ture which the Countess had forgotten. "Heitman Michael is well enough, for a nobleman, and my brother is at me day and night to marry the man: and certainly Heitman Michael's wife will go in satin and diamonds at half the courts of Christendom, with many lackeys to attend her. But I am not to be thus purchased."

"So you told a boy that I remember, very long ago. Yet you married Heitman Michael, for all that, and in the teeth of a number of other fine declarations."

"Oh, no, not I," said this Dorothy, wondering. "I never married anybody. And Heitman Michael has never married anybody, either, old as he is. For he is twenty-eight, and looks every day of it! But who are you, friend, that have such curious notions about me?"

"That question I will answer, just as though it were put reasonably. For surely you perceive I am Jurgen."

"I never knew but one Jurgen. And he is a young man, barely come of age—" Then as she paused in speech, whatever was the matter upon which this girl now meditated, her cheeks were tenderly colored by the thought of it, and in her knowledge of this thing her eyes took infinite joy.

And Jurgen understood. He had come back somehow to the Dorothy whom he had loved: but departed, and past overtaking by the fleet hoofs of centaurs, was the boy who had once loved this Dorothy, and who had rhymed of her as his Heart's Desire: and in the garden there was of this boy no trace. Instead, the girl was talking to a staid and paunchy pawnbroker, of forty-and-something.

So Jurgen shrugged, and looked toward the Centaur: but Nessus had discreetly wandered away from them, in search of four-leafed clovers. Now the east had grown brighter, and its crimson began to be colored with gold.

"Yes, I have heard of this other Jurgen," says the pawnbroker. "Oh, Madame Dorothy, but it was he that loved you!"

"No more than I loved him. Through a whole summer have I loved Jurgen."

And the knowledge that this girl spoke a wondrous truth was now to Jurgen a joy which was keen as pain. And he stood motionless for a while, scowling and biting his lips.

"I wonder how long the poor devil loved you! He also loved for a whole summer, it may be. And yet again, it may be that he loved

you all his life. For twenty years and for more than twenty years I have debated the matter: and I am as well informed as when I started."

"But, friend, you talk in riddles."

"Is not that customary when age talks with youth? For I am an old fellow, in my forties: and you, as I know now, are near eighteen,—or rather, four months short of being eighteen, for it is August. Nay, more, it is the August of a year I had not looked ever to see again. Time here speeds backward: and I wonder if by and by the great Redeemer of Poictesme will not once more be reigning over us, that man of iron whom in my childhood I saw die so horribly. And all that is happening seems very improbable."

Then Jurgen meditated for a while. He shrugged.

"Well, and what could anybody expect me to do about it? Somehow it has befallen that I, who am but the shadow of what I was, now walk among shadows, and we converse with the thin intonations of dead persons. For, Madame Dorothy, you who are not yet eighteen, in this same garden there was once a boy who loved a girl, with such love as it puzzles me to think of now. I believe that she loved him. Yes, certainly, it is a cordial to the tired and battered heart which nowadays pumps blood for me, to think that for a little while, for a whole summer, these two were as brave and comely and clean a pair of sweethearts as the world has known."

Thus Jurgen spoke. But his thinking ran that this was a girl whose equal for loveliness and delight was not to be found between two oceans. Long and long ago that doubtfulness of himself which was closer to him than his skin had fretted Jurgen into believing the Dorothy he had loved was but a piece of his imaginings. But certainly this girl was real. And sweet she was, and innocent she was, and light of heart and feet, beyond the reach of any man's inventiveness. No, Jurgen had not invented her; and it strangely contented him to know as much.

"Tell me your story, sir," says she, "for I love all romances."

"Ah, my dear child, but I cannot tell you very well of just what happened. As I look back, there is a blinding glory of green woods and lawns and moonlit nights and dance music and unreasonable

laughter. I remember her hair and eyes, and the curving and the feel of her red mouth, and once when I was bolder than ordinary— But that is hardly worth raking up at this late day. Well, I see these things in memory as plainly as I now seem to see your face: but I can recollect hardly anything she said. Perhaps, now I think of it, she was not very intelligent, and said nothing worth remembering. But the boy loved her, and was happy, because her lips and her heart were his, and he, as the saying is, had plucked a diamond from the world's ring. True, she was a count's daughter and the sister of a count: but in those days the boy quite firmly intended to become a duke or an emperor or something of that sort, so the transient discrepancy did not worry them."

"I know. Why, Jurgen is going to be a duke, too," says she, very proudly, "though he did think, a great while ago, before he knew me, of being a cardinal, on account of the robes. But cardinals are not allowed to marry, you see— And I am forgetting your story, too! What happened then?"

"They parted in September,—with what vows it hardly matters now,—and the boy went into Gâtinais, to win his spurs under the old Vidame de Soyecourt. And presently—oh, a good while before Christmas!—came the news that Dorothy la Désirée had married rich Heitman Michael."

"But that is what I am called! And, as you know, there is a Heitman Michael who is always plaguing me. Is that not strange! for you tell me all this happened a great while ago."

"Indeed, the story is very old, and it was old when Methuselah was teething. There is no older and more common story anywhere. As the sequel, it would be heroic to tell you this boy's life was ruined. But I do not think it was. Instead, he had learned all of a sudden that which at twenty-one is heady knowledge. That was the hour which taught him sorrow and rage, and sneering, too, for a redemption. Oh, it was armor that hour brought him, and a humor to use it, because no woman now could hurt him very seriously. No, never any more!"

"Ah, the poor boy!" said Dorothy,—divinely tender, and smiling as a goddess smiles, not quite in mirth.

"Well, women, as he knew by experience now, were the pleasantest of playfellows. So he began to play. Rampaging through the

world he went in the pride of his youth and in the armor of his hurt. And songs he made for the pleasure of kings, and sword-play he made for the pleasure of men, and a whispering he made for the pleasure of women, in places where renown was, and where he trod boldly, giving pleasure to everybody, in those fine days. But the whispering, and all that followed the whispering, was his best game, and the game he played for the longest while, with many brightly colored playmates who took the game more seriously than he did. And their faith in the game's importance, and in him and in his high-sounding nonsense, he very often found amusing: and in their other chattels too he took his natural pleasure. Then, when he had played sufficiently, he held a consultation with divers waning appetites; and he married that handsome daughter whom charitable Ninzian got for a respectable pawnbroker in a fair line of business. And he lived with his wife very much as two people customarily live together. So, all in all, I would not say his life was ruined."

"Why, then, it was," said Dorothy. She stirred uneasily, with an impatient sigh; and you saw that she was vaguely puzzled. "Oh, but somehow I think you are a very horrible old man: and you seem doubly horrible in that glittering queer garment you are wearing."

"No woman ever praised a woman's handiwork, and each of you is particularly severe upon her own. But you are interrupting the saga."

"I do not see"—and those large bright eyes, of which the color was so indeterminable and so dear to Jurgen seemed even larger now,—"but I do not see how there could well be any more."

"Still, human hearts survive the benediction of the priest, as you may perceive any day. This man, at least, inherited his nominal father-in-law's business, and he found it, quite as he had anticipated, the fittest of vocations for a cashiered poet. And so, I suppose, he was content. Ah, yes; but after a while Heitman Michael returned from foreign parts, along with his lackeys, and plate, and chest upon chest of merchandise, and his fine horses, and his wife. And he who had been her lover could see her now, after so many years, whenever he liked. She was a handsome stranger. That was all. She was rather stupid. She was nothing remarkable, one way

or another. This respectable pawnbroker saw that quite plainly: day by day he writhed under the knowledge. Because, as I must tell you, he could not retain composure in her presence, even now. No, he was never able to do that."

The girl somewhat condensed her brows over this information. "You mean that he still loved her. Why, but of course!"

"My child," says Jurgen, now with a reproving forefinger, "you are an incurable romanticist. The man disliked her and despised her. At any event, he assured himself that he did. Well, even so, this handsome stupid stranger held his eyes, and muddled his thoughts, and put errors into his accounts: and when he touched her hand he did not sleep that night as he was used to sleep. Thus he saw her, day after day. And they whispered that this handsome and stupid stranger had a liking for young men who aided her artfully to deceive her husband: but she never showed any such favor to the respectable pawnbroker. For youth had gone out of him, and it seemed that nothing in particular happened. . . . Well, that was his saga. About her I do not know. And I shall never know! But certainly she got the name of deceiving Heitman Michael with two young men, or with five young men it might be, but never with a respectable pawnbroker."

"I think that is an exceedingly cynical and stupid story," observed the girl. "And so I shall be off to look for Jurgen. For he makes love very amusingly," says Dorothy, with the sweetest, loveliest meditative smile that ever was lost to heaven.

And a madness came upon Jurgen, there in the garden between dawn and sunrise, and a disbelief in such injustice as now seemed incredible.

"No, Heart's Desire," he cried, "I will not let you go. For you are dear and pure and faithful, and all my evil dream, wherein you were a wanton and befooled me, was not true. Surely, mine was a dream that can never be true so long as there is any justice upon earth. Why, there is no imaginable God who would permit a boy to be robbed of that which in my evil dream was taken from me!"

"And still I cannot understand your talking, about this dream of yours—!"

"Why, it seemed to me I had lost the most of myself; and there was left only a brain which played with ideas, and a body that went

delicately down pleasant ways. And I could not believe as my fellows believed, nor could I love them, nor could I detect anything in aught they said or did save their exceeding folly: for I had lost their cordial common faith in the importance of what use they made of half-hours and months and years; and because a jill-flirt had opened my eyes so that they saw too much, I had lost faith in the importance of my own actions, too. There was a little time of which the passing might be made endurable; beyond gaped unpredictable darkness: and that was all there was of certainty anywhere. Now tell me, Heart's Desire, but was not that a foolish dream? For these things never happened. Why, it would not be fair if these things ever happened!"

And the girl's eyes were wide and puzzled and a little frightened. "I do not understand what you are saying: and there is that about you which troubles me unspeakably. For you call me by the name which none but Jurgen used, and it seems to me that you are Jurgen; and yet you are not Jurgen."

"But I am truly Jurgen. And look you, I have done what never any man has done before! For I have won back to that first love whom every man must lose, no matter whom he marries. I have come back again, passing very swiftly over the grave of a dream and through the malice of time, to my Heart's Desire! And how strange it seems that I did not know this thing was inevitable!"

"Still, friend, I do not understand you."

"Why, but I yawned and fretted in preparation for some great and beautiful adventure which was to befall me by and by, and dazedly I toiled forward. Whereas behind me all the while was the garden between dawn and sunrise, and therein you awaited me! Now assuredly, the life of every man is a quaintly builded tale, in which the right and proper ending comes first. Thereafter time runs forward, not as schoolmen fable in a straight line, but in a vast closed curve, returning to the place of its starting. And it is by a dim foreknowledge of this, by some faint prescience of justice and reparation being given them by and by, that men have heart to live. For I know now that I have always known this thing. What else was living good for unless it brought me back to you?"

But the girl shook her small glittering head, very sadly. "I do not understand you, and I fear you. For you talk foolishness and in

your face I see the face of Jurgen as one might see the face of a dead man drowned in muddy water."

"Yet am I truly Jurgen, and, as it seems to me, for the first time since we were parted. For I am strong and admirable,—even I, who sneered and played so long, because I thought myself a thing of no worth at all. That which has been since you and I were young together is as a mist that passes: and I am strong and admirable, and all my being is one vast hunger for you, my dearest, and I will not let you go, for you, and you alone, are my Heart's Desire."

Now the girl was looking at him very steadily, with a small puzzled frown, and with her vivid young soft lips a trifle parted. And all her tender loveliness was glorified by the light of a sky that had turned to dusty palpitating gold.

"Ah, but you say that you are strong and admirable: and I can only marvel at such talking. For I see that which all men see."

And then Dorothy showed him the little mirror which was attached to the long chain of turquoise matrix about her neck: and Jurgen studied the frightened foolish aged face that he found in this mirror.

Thus drearily did sanity return to Jurgen: and his flare of passion died, and the fever and storm and the impetuous whirl of things had ended, and the man was very weary. And in the silence he heard the piping cry of a bird that seemed to seek for what it could not find.

"Well, I am answered," said the pawnbroker: "and yet I know that this is not the final answer. Dearer than any hope of heaven was that moment when awed surmises first awoke as to the new strange loveliness which I had seen in the face of Dorothy. It was then I noted the faint flush suffusing all her face from chin to brow so often as my eyes encountered and found new lights in the shining eyes which were no longer entirely frank in meeting mine. Well, let that be, for I do not love Heitman Michael's wife.

"It is a grief to remember how we followed love, and found his service lovely. It is bitter to recall the sweetness of those vows which proclaimed her mine eternally,—vows that were broken even in their making, by prolonged and unforgotten kisses. We used to laugh at Heitman Michael then; we used to laugh at everything. Thus for a while, for a whole summer, we were as brave and comely

and clean a pair of sweethearts as this world has known. But let that be, for I do not love Heitman Michael's wife.

"Our love was fair but short-lived. There is none that may revive him since the small feet of Dorothy trod out this small love's life. Yet when this life of ours too is over—this parsimonious life which can allow us no more love for anybody,—must we not win back, somehow, to that faithfulness we vowed against eternity? and shall we not be content again, in some fair-colored realm? Assuredly I think this thing will happen. Well, but let that be; for I do not love Heitman Michael's wife."

"All this is excellent hearing," observed Dorothy, "because I can see you are converting your sorrow into the raw stuff of verses. So I shall be off to look for Jurgen, since he makes love quite otherwise and far more amusingly."

And again, whatever was the matter upon which this girl now meditated, her cheeks were tenderly colored by the thought of it, and in her knowledge of this thing her eyes took infinite joy.

Thus it was for a moment only: for she left Jurgen now, with the friendliest light waving of her hand; and so passed from him, not thinking of this old fellow any longer, as he could see, even in the instant she turned from him. And she went toward the dawn, in search of that young Jurgen whom she, who was perfect in all things, had loved, though only for a little while, not undeservedly.

OF COMPROMISES IN LEUKÊ

Now the tale tells that ten days later Jurgen and his Hamadryad were duly married, in consonance with the law of the Wood: not for a moment did Chloris consider any violation of the proprieties, so they were married the first evening she could assemble her kindred.

"Still, Chloris, I already have two wives," says Jurgen, "and it is but fair to confess it."

"I thought it was only yesterday you arrived in Leukê."

"That is true: for I came with the Equinox, over the long sea."

"Then Jugatinus has not had time to marry you to anybody, and certainly he would never think of marrying you to two wives. Why do you talk such nonsense?"

"No, it is true, I was not married by Jugatinus."

"So there!" says Chloris, as if that settled matters. "Now you see for yourself."

"Why, yes, to be sure," says Jurgen, "that does put rather a different light upon it, now I think of it."

"It makes all the difference in the world."

"I would hardly go that far. Still, I perceive it makes a difference."

"Why, you talk as if everybody did not know that Jugatinus marries people!"

"No, dear, let us be fair! I did not say precisely that."

"—And as if everybody was not always married by Jugatinus!"

"Yes, here in Leukê, perhaps. But outside of Leukê, you understand, my darling!"

"But nobody goes outside of Leukê. Nobody ever thinks of leaving Leukê. I never heard such nonsense."

"You mean, nobody ever leaves this island?"

"Nobody that you ever hear of. Of course, there are Lares and Penates, with no social position, that the kings of Pseudopolis sometimes take a-voyaging—"

"Still, the people of other countries do get married."

"No, Jurgen," said Chloris, sadly, "it is a rule with Jugatinus never to leave the island; and indeed I am sure that at his age he has never even considered such unheard-of conduct: so, of course, the people of other countries are not able to get married."

"Well, but, Chloris, in Eubonia—"

"Now if you do not mind, dear, I think we had better talk about something more pleasant. I do not blame you men of Eubonia, because all men are in such matters perfectly irresponsible. And perhaps it is not altogether the fault of the women, either, though I do think any really self-respecting woman would have the strength of character to keep out of such irregular relations, and that much I am compelled to say. So do not let us talk any more about these persons whom you describe as your wives. It is very nice of you, dear, to call them that, and I appreciate your delicacy. Still, I really do believe we had better talk about something else."

Jurgen deliberated. "Yet do you not think, Chloris, that, in the absence of Jugatinus,—and in, as I understand this matter, the unavoidable absence of Jugatinus,—somebody else might perform the ceremony?"

"Oh, yes, if they wanted to. But it would not count. Nobody but Jugatinus can really marry people. And so of course nobody else does."

"What makes you sure of that?"

"Why, because," said Chloris, triumphantly, "nobody ever heard of such a thing."

"You have voiced," said Jurgen, "an entire code of philosophy. Let us by all means go to Jugatinus and be married."

So they were married by Jugatinus, according to the ceremony with which the People of the Wood were always married by Jugatinus. First, Virgo loosed the girdle of Chloris in such fashion as was customary; and Chloris, after sitting much longer than Jurgen liked in the lap of Mutinus (who was in the state that custom required of him), was led back to Jurgen by Domiducus in accordance with immemorial custom. Subigo did her customary part; then

Praema grasped the bride's plump arms: and everything was perfectly regular.

Thereafter Jurgen disposed of his staff in the way Thersitês had directed: and thereafter Jurgen abode with Chloris upon the outskirts of the forest, and complied with the custom of Leukê. Her tree was a rather large oak, for Chloris was now in her two hundred and sixty-sixth year; and at first its commodious trunk sheltered them. But later Jurgen builded himself a little cabin thatched with bird's wings, and made himself more comfortable.

"It is well enough for you, my dear, in fact it is expected of you, to live in a tree-bole. But it makes me feel uncomfortably like a worm, and it needlessly emphasizes the restrictions of married life. Besides, you do not want me under your feet all the time, nor I you. No, let us cultivate a judicious abstention from familiarity: such is one secret of an enduring, because endurable, marriage. But why is it, pray, that you, with, as it were, your natural gifts, my darling, have never married before, in all these years?"

She told him. At first Jurgen could not believe her, but presently Jurgen was convinced, through at least two of his senses, that what Chloris told him was true about hamadryads.

"Otherwise, you are not markedly unlike the women of Eubonia," said Jurgen.

And now Jurgen met many of the People of the Wood, but since the tree of Chloris stood upon the verge of the forest, he saw far more of the People of the Field, who dwelt between the forest and the city of Pseudopolis. These were the neighbors and the ordinary associates of Chloris and Jurgen; though once in a while, of course, there would be family gatherings in the forest. But Jurgen presently had found good reason to distrust the People of the Wood, and went to none of these gatherings.

"For in Eubonia," he said, "we are taught that your wife's relatives will never find fault with you to your face so long as you keep away from them. And more than that no sensible man expects."

Meanwhile, King Jurgen was perplexed by the People of the Field, who were his neighbors. They one and all did what they had always done. Thus Runcina saw to it that the Fields were weeded: Seia took care of the seed while it was buried in the earth:

Nodosa arranged the knots and joints of the stalk: Volusia folded the blade around the corn: each had an immemorial duty. And there was hardly a day that somebody was not busied in the Fields, whether it was Occator harrowing, or Sator and Sarritor about their sowing and raking, or Stercutius manuring the ground: and Hippona was always bustling about in one place or another looking after the horses, or, else, Bubona would be there attending to the cattle. There was never any restfulness in the Fields.

"And why do you do these things year in and year out?" asked Jurgen.

"Why, King of Eubonia, we have always done these things," they said, in high astonishment.

"Yes, but why do you not stop occasionally?"

"Because in that event the work would stop. The corn would die, the cattle would perish, and the Fields would become jungles."

"But, as I understand it, this is not your corn, nor your cattle, nor your Fields. You derive no good from them. And there is nothing to prevent your ceasing this interminable labor, and living as do the People of the Wood, who perform no heavy work whatever."

"I should think not!" said Aristæus, and his teeth flashed in a smile that was very pleasant to see, as he strained at the olive-press. "Whoever heard of the People of the Wood doing anything useful!"

"Yes, but," says Jurgen, patiently, "do you think it is quite fair to yourselves to be always about some tedious and difficult labor when nobody compels you to do it? Why do you not now and then take a holiday?"

"King Jurgen," replied Fornax, looking up from the little furnace wherein she was parching corn, "you are talking nonsense. The People of the Field have never taken holiday. Nobody ever heard of such a thing."

"We should think not indeed!" said all the others, sagely.

"Ah, ah!" said Jurgen, "so that is your demolishing reason. Well, I shall inquire about this matter among the People of the Wood, for they may be more sensible."

Then as Jurgen was about to enter the forest, he encountered Terminus, perfumed with ointment, and crowned with a garland of roses, and standing stock still.

"Aha," said Jurgen, "so here is one of the People of the Wood about to go down into the Fields. But if I were you, my friend, I would keep away from any such foolish place."

"I never go down into the Fields," said Terminus.

"Oh, then, you are returning into the forest."

"But certainly not. Whoever heard of my going into the forest!"

"Indeed, now I look at you, you are merely standing here."

"I have always stood here," said Terminus.

"And do you never move?"

"No," said Terminus.

"And for what reason?"

"Because I have always stood here without moving," replied Terminus. "Why, for me to move would be a quite unheard-of thing."

So Jurgen left him, and went into the forest. And there Jurgen encountered a smiling young fellow, who rode upon the back of a large ram. This young man had his left fore-finger laid to his lips, and his right hand held an astonishing object to be thus publicly displayed.

"But, oh, dear me! now, really, sir—!" says Jurgen.

"Bah!" says the ram.

But the smiling young fellow said nothing at all as he passed Jurgen, because it was not the custom of Harpocrates to speak.

"Which would be well enough," reflected Jurgen, "if only his custom did not make for stiffness and the embarrassment of others."

Thereafter Jurgen came upon a considerable commotion in the bushes, where a satyr was at play with an oread.

"Oh, but this forest is not respectable!" said Jurgen. "Have you no ethics and morals, you People of the Wood! Have you no sense of responsibility whatever, thus to be frolicking on a working-day?"

"Why, no," responded the Satyr, "of course not. None of my people have such things: and so the natural vocation of all satyrs is that which you are now interrupting."

"Perhaps you speak the truth," said Jurgen. "Still, you ought to be ashamed of the fact that you are not lying."

"For a satyr to be ashamed of himself would be indeed an unheard-of thing! Now go away, you in the glittering shirt! for we

are studying eudæmonism, and you are talking nonsense, and I am busy, and you annoy me," said the Satyr.

"Well, but in Cocaigne," said Jurgen, "this eudæmonism was considered an indoor diversion."

"And did you ever hear of a satyr going indoors?"

"Why, save us from all hurt and harm! but what has that to do with it?"

"Do not try to equivocate, you shining idiot! For now you see for yourself you are talking nonsense. And I repeat that such unheard-of nonsense irritates me," said the Satyr.

The Oread said nothing at all. But she too looked annoyed, and Jurgen reflected that it was probably not the custom of oreads to be rescued from the eudæmonism of satyrs.

So Jurgen left them; and yet deeper in the forest he found a bald-headed squat old man, with a big paunch and a flat red nose and very small bleared eyes. Now the old fellow was so helplessly drunk that he could not walk: instead, he sat upon the ground, and leaned against a tree-bole.

"This is a quite disgusting state for you to be in so early in the morning," observed Jurgen.

"But Silenus is always drunk," the bald-headed man responded, with a dignified hiccough.

"So here is another one of you! Well, and why are you always drunk, Silenus?"

"Because Silenus is the wisest of the People of the Wood."

"Ah, ah! but I apologize. For here at last is somebody with a plausible excuse for his daily employment. Now, then, Silenus, since you are so wise, come tell me, is it really the best fate for a man to be drunk always?"

"Not at all. Drunkenness is a joy reserved for the Gods: so do men partake of it impiously, and so are all human drunkards quite properly punished for their audacity. For men, it is best of all never to be born; but, being born, to die very quickly."

"Ah, yes! but failing either?"

"The third best thing for a man is to do that which seems expected of him," replied Silenus.

"But that is the Law of Philistia: and with Philistia, they inform me, Pseudopolis is at war."

Silenus meditated. Jurgen had discovered an uncomfortable thing about this old fellow, and it was that his small bleared eyes did not blink nor the lids twitch at all. His eyes moved, as through magic the eyes of a painted statue might move horribly, under quite motionless red lids. Therefore it was uncomfortable when these eyes moved toward you.

"Young fellow in the glittering shirt, I will tell you a secret: and it is that the Philistines were created after the image of Koshchei who made some things as they are. Do you think upon that! So the Philistines do that which seems expected. And the people of Leukê were created after the image of Koshchei who made yet other things as they are: therefore do the people of Leukê do that which is customary, adhering to classical tradition. Do you think upon that also! Then do you pick your side in this war, remembering that you side with stupidity either way. And when that happens which will happen, do you remember how Silenus foretold to you precisely what would happen, a long while before it happened, because Silenus was so old and so wise and so very disreputably drunk, and so very, very sleepy."

"Yes, certainly, Silenus: but how will this war end?"

"Dullness will conquer dullness: and it will not matter."

"Ah, yes! but what will become, in all this fighting, of Jurgen?"

"That will not matter either," said Silenus, comfortably. "Nobody will bother about you." And with that he closed his horrible bleared eyes and went to sleep.

So Jurgen left the old tippler, and started to leave the forest also. "For undoubtedly all the people in Leukê are resolute to do that which is customary," reflected Jurgen, "for the unarguable reason it is their custom, and has always been their custom. And they will desist from these practices when the cat eats acorns, but not before. So it is the part of wisdom to inquire no further into the matter. For after all, these people may be right; and certainly I cannot go so far as to say they are wrong." Jurgen shrugged. "But still, at the same time—!"

Now in returning to his cabin Jurgen heard a frightful sort of yowling and a screeching as of mad people.

"Hail, daughter of various-formed Protogonus, thou that takest joy in mountains and battles and in the beating of the drum! Hail,

thou deceitful savior, mother of all gods, that comest now, pleased with long wanderings, to be propitious to us!"

But the uproar was becoming so increasingly unpleasant that Jurgen at this point withdrew into a thicket: and thence he witnessed the passing through the Woods of a notable procession. There were features connected with this procession sufficiently unusual to cause Jurgen to vow that the desiderated moment wherein he walked unhurt from the forest would mark the termination of his last visit thereto. Then amazement tripped up the heels of terror: for now passed Mother Sereda. To-day, in place of a towel about her head, she wore a species of crown,—not such a crown as that painting of sullen Æsred had exhibited, in Cocaigne, but a crown shaped like a circlet of crumbling towers. She carried, also, a large key, and her chariot was drawn by two lions. She was attended by howling persons, with shaved heads: and it was apparent that these persons had parted with possessions which Jurgen valued.

"This is undoubtedly," said he, "a most unwholesome forest."

Jurgen inquired about this procession, later, and from Chloris he got information which surprised him.

"And these are the beings who I had thought were poetic ornaments of speech! But what is the old lady doing in such high company?"

He described Mother Sereda, and Chloris told him who this was. Now Jurgen shook his sleek black head.

"Behold another mystery! Yet, after all, it is no concern of mine if the old lady elects for an additional anagram. I should be the last person to criticize her, inasmuch as to me she has been more than generous. Well, I shall preserve her friendship by the infallible recipe of keeping out of her way. Oh, but I shall certainly keep out of her way now that I have perceived what is done to the men who serve her."

And after that Jurgen and Chloris lived very pleasantly together, though Jurgen began to find his Hamadryad a trifle unperceptive, if not actually obtuse.

"She does not understand me, and she does not always treat my superior wisdom quite respectfully. That is unfair, but it seems to be an unavoidable feature of married life. Besides, if any woman

had ever understood me she would, in self-protection, have refused to marry me. In any case, Chloris is a dear brown plump delicious partridge of a darling: and cleverness in women is, after all, a virtue misplaced."

And Jurgen did not return into the Woods, nor did he go down into the city. Neither the People of the Field nor of the Wood, of course, ever went within city gates. "But I should think you would like to see the fine sights of Pseudopolis," says Chloris,—"and that fine Queen of theirs," she added, almost as though she spoke without premeditation.

"Woman dear," says Jurgen, "I do not wish to appear boastful. But in Eubonia, now! well, really some day we must return to my kingdom, and you shall inspect for yourself a dozen or two of my cities, Ziph and Eglington and Poissieux and Gazden and Bäremburg, at all events. And then you will concede with me that this little village of Pseudopolis, while well enough in its way—!" And Jurgen shrugged, with the nicest possible comminglement of amusement and pity over the claims of Pseudopolis.

"Sometimes," said Chloris, "I wonder if there is any such place as your fine kingdom of Eubonia: for certainly it grows larger and more splendid every time you talk of it."

"Now can it be," asks Jurgen, more hurt than angry, "that you suspect me of uncandid dealing and, in short, of being an impostor!"

"Why, what does it matter? You are Jurgen," she answered, happily.

And the man was moved as she smiled at him across the glowing queer embroidery-work at which Chloris seemed to labor interminably: he was conscious of a tenderness for her which was oddly remorseful: and it appeared to him that, if he had known lovelier women, he assuredly had found nowhere anyone more lovable than was this plump and busy and sunny-tempered little wife of his.

"My dear, I do not care to see Queen Helen again, and that is a fact. I am contented here, with a wife befitting my station, suited to my endowments, and unspeakably excelling my deserts."

"And do you think of that tow-headed bean pole very often, King Jurgen?"

"That is unfair, and you wrong me, Chloris, with these unmer-

ited suspicions. It pains me to reflect, my dear, that you esteem the tie between us so lightly you can consider me capable of breaking it even in thought."

"To talk of fairness is all very well, but it is no answer to a plain question."

Jurgen looked full at her; and he laughed. "You women are so unscrupulously practical. My dear, I have seen Queen Helen face to face. But it is you whom I love as a man customarily loves a woman."

"That is not saying much."

"No: for I endeavor to speak in consonance with my importance. You forget that I have also seen Achilles."

"But you admired Achilles! You told me so yourself."

"I admired the perfections of Achilles, but I cordially dislike any man who possesses them. Therefore I shall keep away from both the King and Queen of Pseudopolis."

"Yet you will not go into the Woods, either, Jurgen—"

"Not after what I have witnessed there," said Jurgen, with a large shudder which was not very much exaggerated.

Now Chloris laughed, and she quitted her queer embroidery in order to rumple up his hair. "And you find the People of the Field so insufferably stupid, and so uninterested by your Zorobasiuses and Ptolemopiters and so on, that you keep away from them also. O foolish man of mine, you are determined to be neither fish nor beast nor poultry: and nowhere will you ever consent to be happy."

"It was not I who determined my nature, Chloris: and as for being happy, I make no complaint. Indeed, I have nothing to complain of, nowadays. So I am very well contented by my dear wife and by my manner of living in Leukê," said Jurgen, with a sigh.

CONCERNING HORVENDILE'S NONSENSE

It was on a bright and tranquil day in November, at the period which the People of the Field called the summer of Alcyonê, that Jurgen went down from the forest; and after skirting the moats of Pseudopolis, and avoiding a meeting with any of the town's dispiritingly glorious inhabitants, Jurgen came to the seashore.

Chloris had suggested his doing this, in order that she could have a chance to straighten things in his cabin while she was tidying her tree for the winter, and could so make one day's work serve for two. For the dryad of an oak tree has large responsibilities, what with the care of so many dead leaves all winter, and the acorns being blown from their places and littering up the ground everywhere, and the bark cracking until it looks positively disreputable: and Jurgen was at any such work less a help than a hindrance. So Chloris gave him a parcel of lunch and a perfunctory kiss, and told him to go down to the seashore and get inspired and make up a pretty poem about her. "And do you be back in time for an early supper, Jurgen," says she, "but not a minute before."

Thus it befell that Jurgen reflectively ate his lunch in solitude, and regarded the Euxine. The sun was high, and the queer shadow that followed Jurgen was huddled into shapelessness.

"This is indeed an inspiring spectacle," Jurgen reflected. "How puny seems the race of man, in contrast with this mighty sea, which now spreads before me like, as So-and-so has very strikingly observed, a something or other under such and such conditions!" Then Jurgen shrugged. "Really, now I think of it, though, there is no call for me to be suffused with the traditional emotions. It looks like a great deal of water, and like nothing else in particular. And I cannot but consider the water is behaving rather futilely."

So he sat in drowsy contemplation of the sea. Far out a shadow

would form on the water, like the shadow of a broadish plank, scudding shoreward, and lengthening and darkening as it approached. Presently it would be some hundred feet in length, and would assume a hard, smooth darkness, like that of green stone: this was the under side of the wave. Then the top of it would curdle, the southern end of the wave would collapse, and with exceeding swiftness this white feathery falling would plunge and scamper and bluster northward, the full length of the wave. It would be neater and more workmanlike to have each wave tumble down as a whole. From the smacking and the splashing, what looked like boiling milk would thrust out over the brown, sleek sands: and, as the mess spread, it would thin to a reticulated whiteness, like lace, and then to the appearance of smoke sprays clinging to the sands. Plainly the tide was coming in.

Or perhaps it was going out. Jurgen's notions as to such phenomena were vague. But, either way, the sea was stirring up a large commotion and a rather pleasant and invigorating odor.

And then all this would happen once more: and then it would happen yet again. It had happened a number of hundred of times since Jurgen first sat down to eat his lunch: and what was gained by it? The sea was behaving stupidly. There was no sense in this continual sloshing and spanking and scrabbling and spluttering.

That, anyhow, was Jurgen's opinion, as he nodded over the remnants of his lunch.

"Sheer waste of energy, I am compelled to call it," said Jurgen, aloud, just as he noticed there were two other men on this long beach.

One came from the north, one from the south, so that they met not far from where Jurgen was sitting: and by an incredible coincidence Jurgen had known both of these men in his first youth. So he hailed them, and they recognized him at once. One of these travelers was the Horvendile who had been going about in Poictesme when Jurgen was first a lad: and the other was Perion de la Forêt, that outlaw who had come to Bellegarde, very long ago, disguised as the Vicomte de Puysange. And all three of these old acquaintances had kept their youth surprisingly.

Now Horvendile and Perion marveled at the fine shirt which Jurgen was wearing.

"Why, you must know," he said, modestly, "that I have lately become King of Eubonia, and must dress according to my station."

So they said they had always expected some such high honor to befall him, and then the three of them fell to talking. And Perion told how he had come through Pseudopolis, on his way to King Theodoret at Lacre Kai, and how in the market-place at Pseudopolis he had seen Queen Helen. "She is a very lovely lady," said Perion, "but I was troubled by her resemblance to Count Emmerick's fair sister, whom we all remember."

"I noticed that at once," said Horvendile, and he smiled strangely, "when I, too, passed through the city."

"Why, but nobody could fail to notice it," said Jurgen.

"It is not, of course, that I consider her to be as lovely as Dame Melicent," continued Perion, "since, as I have contended in all quarters of the world, there has never lived, and will never live, any woman so beautiful as Melicent. But you gentlemen appear surprised by what seems to me a very simple statement. Your air, in fine, is one that forces me to point out it is a statement I can permit nobody to deny." And Perion's honest eyes had narrowed unpleasantly, and his sun-browned countenance was uncomfortably stern.

"Dear sir," said Jurgen, hastily, "it was merely that it appeared to me the lady whom hereabouts they call Queen Helen is quite evidently Count Emmerick's sister Dorothy la Désirée."

"Whereas I recognized her at once," says Horvendile, "as Count Emmerick's third sister, La Beale Ettarre."

And now they stared at one another, for it was certain that these three sisters were not particularly alike.

"Putting aside any question of eyesight," observes Perion, "it is indisputable that the language of both of you is distorted. For one of you says this is Madame Dorothy, and the other says this is Madame Ettarre: whereas everybody knows that this Queen Helen, whomever she may resemble, cannot possibly be anybody else except Queen Helen."

"To you, who are always the same person," replied Jurgen, "that may sound reasonable. For my part, I am several people: and I detect no incongruity in other persons' resembling me."

"There would be no incongruity anywhere," suggested Horvendile, "if Queen Helen were the woman whom we had loved in vain. For the woman whom when we were young we loved in vain is the one woman that we can never see quite clearly, whatever happens. So we might easily, I suppose, confuse her with some other woman."

"But Melicent is the lady whom I have loved in vain," said Perion, "and I care nothing whatever about Queen Helen. Why should I? What do you mean now, Horvendile, by your hints that I have faltered in my constancy to Dame Melicent since I saw Queen Helen? I do not like such hints."

"Nevertheless, it is Ettarre whom I love, and have loved not quite in vain, and have loved unfalteringly," says Horvendile, with his quiet smile: "and I am certain that it was Ettarre whom I beheld when I looked upon Queen Helen."

"I may confess," says Jurgen, clearing his throat, "that I have always regarded Madame Dorothy with peculiar respect and admiration. For the rest, I am married. Even so, I think that Madame Dorothy is Queen Helen."

Then they fell to debating this mystery. And presently Perion said the one way out was to leave the matter to Queen Helen. "She at all events must know who she is. So do one of you go back into the city, and embrace her knees as is the custom of this country when one implores a favor of the King or of the Queen: and do you then ask her fairly."

"Not I," says Jurgen. "I am upon terms of some intimacy with a hamadryad just at present. I am content with my Hamadryad. And I intend never to venture into the presence of Queen Helen any more, in order to preserve my contentment."

"Why, but I cannot go," says Perion, "because Dame Melicent has a little mole upon her left cheek. And Queen Helen's cheek is flawless. You understand, of course, that I am certain this mole immeasurably enhances the beauty of Dame Melicent," he added, loyally. "None the less, I mean to hold no further traffic with Queen Helen."

"Now my reason for not going is this," said Horvendile:—"that if I attempted to embrace the knees of Ettarre, whom people hereabouts call Helen, she would instantly vanish. Other matters apart,

I do not wish to bring any such misfortune upon the Island of Leukê."

"But that," said Perion, "is nonsense."

"Of course it is," said Horvendile. "That probably is why it happens."

So none of them would go. And each of them clung, none the less, to his own opinion about Queen Helen. And presently Perion said they were wasting both time and words. Then Perion bade the two other young men farewell, and Perion continued southward, toward Lacre Kai. And as he went he sang a song in honor of Dame Melicent, whom he celebrated as Heart o' My Heart: and the two who heard him agreed that Perion de la Forêt was to every likelihood the worst poet in the world.

"Nevertheless, there goes a very chivalrous and worthy gentleman," said Horvendile, "intent to play out the remainder of his romance. I wonder if the Author gets much pleasure from these naïve, robustious and conscientiously dull characters? At least, they must be easy to manipulate."

"I cultivate a judicious amount of gallantry," says Jurgen: "I do not any longer aspire to be chivalrous. And indeed, Horvendile, it seems to me indisputable that each one of us is the hero in his own romance, and cannot understand any other person's romance, but misinterprets everything therein, very much as we three have fallen out in the simple matter of a woman's face."

Now young Horvendile meditatively stroked his own curly and reddish hair, brushing it away from his ears with his left hand, as he sat there staring meditatively at nothing in particular.

"I would put in, Jurgen, that we three have met like characters out of three separate romances which the Author has composed in different styles."

"That also," Jurgen submitted, "would be nonsense."

"Ah, but perhaps the Author very often perpetrates nonsense. Come, Jurgen, you who are King of Eubonia!" says Horvendile, with his wide-set eyes a-twinkle; "what is there in you or me to attest that our Author has not composed our romances with his tongue in his cheek?"

"Messire Horvendile, if you are attempting to joke about Koshchei who made all things as they are, I warn you I do not consider

that kind of humor very wholesome. Without being prudish, I believe in common-sense: and I would vastly prefer to have you talk about something else."

Horvendile was still smiling. "You look some day to come to Koshchei, as you call the Author. That is easily said, and sounds excellently. Ah, but how will you recognize Koshchei? and how do you know you have not already passed by Koshchei in some street or meadow? Come now, King Jurgen," said Horvendile, and still his young face wore an impish smile; "come tell me, how do you know that I am not Koshchei who made all things as they are to this side and the other side of us?"

"Be off with you!" says Jurgen; "you would never have had the wit to invent a Jurgen. Something else is troubling me: I have just recollected that the young Perion who left us only a moment since, grew to be rich and gray-headed and famous, and took Dame Melicent from her pagan husband, and married her himself; and that all this happened long years ago. So our recent talk with young Perion seems very improbable."

"Why, but do you not remember, too, that I ran away in the night when Maugis d'Aigremont stormed Storisende? and was never heard of any more? and that all this, too, some while ago was an old story? Do you not remember that it was I who sent your blustering bald father so far into the West, where Yaotl jested with him? and I who even before that time first fetched the father of your Madame Dorothy into Poictesme? Yet you and I and Perion have all met to-day, as three fine young fellows, here on the beach of fabulous Leukê. . . . I put it to you fairly, King Jurgen: now how could this conceivably have come about unless the Author sometimes composes nonsense?"

"Truly the way that you express it, Horvendile, the thing does seem a little strange; and I can think of no explanation rendering it plausible."

"Again, see now, King Jurgen of Eubonia, how you underrate the Author's ability. This is one of the romancer's most venerable devices that is being practiced. See for yourself!" And suddenly Horvendile pushed Jurgen so that Jurgen tumbled over in the warm sand.

Then Jurgen arose, gaping and stretching himself. "That was a

very foolish dream I had, napping here in the sun. For it was certainly a dream. Otherwise, they would have left footprints, these young fellows who have gone the way of youth so long ago. And it was a dream that had no sense in it. But indeed it would be strange if that were the whole point of it, and if living, too, were such a dream, as that queer Horvendile would have me think."

Jurgen snapped his fingers.

"Well, and what in common fairness could he or anyone else expect me to do about it! That is the answer I fling at you, you Horvendile whom I made up in a dream. And I disown you as the most futile of my inventions. So be off with you! and a good riddance, too, for I never held with upsetting people."

Then Jurgen dusted himself, and he trudged home to an early supper with the Hamadryad who contented him.

ECONOMICS OF KING JURGEN

Now Jurgen's curious dream put notions into the restless head of Jurgen. So mighty became his curiosity that he went shuddering into the abhorred Woods, and passed over Coalisnacoan (which is the Ferry of Dogs), and did all such detestable things as were necessary to placate Phobetor. Then Jurgen tricked Phobetor by an indescribable device, wherein surprising use was made of a cheese and three beetles and a gimlet, and so cheated Phobetor out of a gray magic. And that night, while Pseudopolis slept, King Jurgen came down into this city of gold and ivory.

Jurgen went with distaste among the broad-browed and great-limbed monarchs of Pseudopolis, for they reminded him of things which he had long ago put aside, and they made him feel unpleasantly ignoble and insignificant. That was his real reason for avoiding the city.

Now he passed between unlighted and silent palaces, walking in deserted streets where the moon made ominous shadows. Here was the house of Ajax Telamon who reigned in sea-girt Salamis, here that of godlike Philoctetês: much-counseling Odysseus dwelt just across the way, and the corner residence was fair-haired Agamemnon's: in the moonlight Jurgen easily made out these names engraved upon the bronze shield that hung beside each doorway. To every side of him slept the heroes of old song while Jurgen skulked under their windows.

He remembered how incuriously—not even scornfully,—these people had overlooked him on that disastrous afternoon when he had ventured into Pseudopolis by daylight. And a spiteful little gust of rage possessed him, and Jurgen shook his fist at the big silent palaces.

"Yah!" he snarled: for he did not know at all what it was that he desired to say to those great stupid heroes who did not care

what he said, but he knew that he hated them. Then Jurgen became aware of himself growling there like a kicked cur who is afraid to bite, and he began to laugh at this Jurgen.

"Your pardon, gentlemen of Greece," says he, with a wide ceremonious bow, "and I think the information I wished to convey was that I am a monstrous clever fellow."

Jurgen went into the largest palace, and crept stealthily by the bedroom of Achilles, King of Men, treading a-tiptoe; and so came at last into a little room paneled with cedar wood where slept Queen Helen. She was smiling in her sleep when he had lighted his lamp, with due observance of the gray magic. She was unimaginably beautiful, this young Dorothy whom people hereabouts through some odd error called Helen.

For Jurgen saw very well that this was Count Emmerick's sister Dorothy la Désirée, whom Jurgen had vainly loved in the days when Jurgen was young alike in body and in heart. Just once he had won back to her, in the garden between dawn and sunrise: but he was then a time-battered burgher whom Dorothy could not recognize. Now he came to her a king, less admirable it might be than some of the many other kings without realms who slept now in Pseudopolis, but still very fine in his borrowed youth, and, above all, armored by a gray magic: so that improbabilities were possible. And Jurgen's eyes were furtive, and he passed his tongue across his upper lip from one corner to the other, and his hand went out toward the robe of violet-colored wool which covered the sleeping girl, for he stood ready to awaken Dorothy la Désirée in the way he often awoke Chloris.

But a queer thought held him. Nothing, he recollected, had shown the power to hurt him very deeply since he had lost this young Dorothy. And to affairs which threatened to result unpleasantly, he had always managed to impart an agreeable turn, ever since then, by virtue of preserving a cool heart. What if by some misfortune he were to get back his real youth? and were to become again the flustered boy who blundered from stammering rapture to wild misery, and back again, at the least word or gesture of a golden-haired girl?

"Thank you, no!" says Jurgen. "The boy was more admirable than I, who am by way of being not wholly admirable. But then

he had a wretched time of it, by and large. Thus it may be that my real youth lies sleeping here: and for no consideration would I re-awaken it."

And yet tears came into his eyes, for no reason at all. And it seemed to him that the sleeping woman, here at his disposal, was not the young Dorothy whom he had seen in the garden between dawn and sunrise, although the two were curiously alike; and that of the two this woman here was, somehow, very much the lovelier.

"Lady, if you indeed be the Swan's daughter, long and long ago there was a child that was ill. And his illness turned to a fever, and in his fever he rose from his bed one night, saying that he must set out for Troy, because of his love for Queen Helen. I was once that child. I remember how strange it seemed to me I should be talking such nonsense: I remember how the warm room smelt of drugs: and I remember how I pitied the trouble in my nurse's face, drawn and old in the yellow lamplight. For she loved me, and she did not understand: and she pleaded with me to be a good boy and not to worry my sleeping parents. But I perceive now that I was not talking nonsense."

He paused, considering the riddle: and his fingers fretted with the robe of violet-colored wool beneath which lay Queen Helen.

"Yours is that beauty of which men know by fabulous report alone, and which they may not ever find, nor ever win to, quite. And for that beauty I have hungered always, even in childhood. Toward that beauty I have struggled always, but not quite wholeheartedly. That night forecast my life. I have hungered for you: and"—Jurgen smiled here,—"and I have always stayed a passably good boy, lest I should beyond reason disturb my family. For to do that, I thought, would not be fair: and still I believe for me to have done that would have been unfair."

He grimaced at this point: for Jurgen was finding his scruples inconveniently numerous.

"And now I think that what I do to-night is not quite fair to Chloris. And I do not know what thing it is that I desire, and the will of Jurgen is a feather in the wind. But I know that I would like to love somebody as Chloris loves me, and as so many women have loved me. And I know that it is you who have prevented this, Queen Helen, at every moment of my life since the disastrous

moment when I first seemed to find your loveliness in the face of Madame Dorothy. It is the memory of your beauty, as I then saw it mirrored in the face of a jill-flirt, which has enfeebled me for such honest love as other men give women: and I envy these other men. For Jurgen has loved nothing—not even you, not even Jurgen!—quite whole-heartedly. Well, what if I took vengeance now upon this thieving comeliness, upon this robber that strips life of joy and sorrow?"

Jurgen stood at Queen Helen's bedside, watching her, for a long while. He had shifted into a less fanciful mood: and the shadow that followed him was ugly and hulking and wavering upon the cedarn wall of Queen Helen's sleeping-chamber.

"Mine is a magic which does not fail," old Phobetor had said, while his attendants raised his eyelids so that he could see King Jurgen.

Now Jurgen remembered this saying. And reflectively he drew back the robe of violet-colored wool, a little way. The breast of Queen Helen lay bare. And she did not move at all, but she smiled in her sleep.

Never had Jurgen imagined that any woman could be so beautiful nor so desirable as was this woman, or that he could ever know such rapture. So Jurgen paused.

"Because," said Jurgen now, "it may be this woman has some fault: it may be there is some fleck in her beauty somewhere. And sooner than know that, I would prefer to retain my unreasonable dreams, and this longing which is unfed and hopeless, and the memory of to-night. Besides, if she were perfect in everything, how could I live any longer, who would have no more to desire? No, I would be betraying my own interests, either way; and injustice is always despicable."

So Jurgen sighed, and he gently replaced the robe of violet-colored wool, and he returned to his Hamadryad.

"And now that I think of it, too," reflected Jurgen, "I am behaving rather nobly. Yes, it is questionless that I have to-night evinced a certain delicacy of feeling which merits appreciation, at all events by King Achilles."

THE ASCENSION OF POPE JURGEN

The tale tells how, on the feast of the Annunciation, Jurgen came to the high white walls which girdled Heaven. For Jurgen's forefathers had, of course, imagined that Hell stood directly contiguous to Heaven, so that the blessed could augment their felicity by gazing down upon the tortures of the damned. Now at this time a boy angel was looking over the parapet of Heaven's wall.

"And a good day to you, my fine fellow," says Jurgen. "But of what are you thinking so intently?" For just as Dives had done long years before, now Jurgen found that a man's voice carries perfectly between Hell and Heaven.

"Sir," replies the boy, "I was pitying the poor damned."

"Why, then, you must be Origen," says Jurgen, laughing.

"No, sir, my name is Jurgen."

"Heyday!" says Jurgen: "well, but this Jurgen has been a great many persons in my time. So very possibly you speak the truth."

"I am Jurgen, the son of Coth and Azra."

"Ah, ah! but so were all of them, my boy."

"Why, then, I am Jurgen, the grandson of Steinvor, and the grandchild whom she loved above her other grandchildren: and so I abide forever in Heaven with all the other illusions of Steinvor. But who, messire, are you that go about Hell unscorched, in such a fine looking shirt?"

Jurgen reflected. Clearly it would never do to give his real name, and thus raise the question as to whether Jurgen was in Heaven or Hell. Then he recollected the cantrap of the Master Philologist, which Jurgen had twice employed incorrectly. And Jurgen cleared his throat, for he believed that he now understood the proper use of such cantraps.

"Perhaps," said Jurgen, "I ought not to tell you who I am. But what is life without confidence in one another? Besides, you appear

a boy of remarkable discretion. So I will confide in you that I am Pope John the Twentieth, Heaven's regent upon Earth, now visiting this place upon Celestial business which I am not at liberty to divulge more particularly, for reasons that will at once occur to a young man of your unusual cleverness."

"Oh! but I say! that is droll. Do you just wait a moment!" cried the boy angel.

His bright face vanished, with a whisking of brown curls: and Jurgen carefully re-read the cantrap of the Master Philologist. "Yes, I have found, I think, the way to use such magic," observes Jurgen.

Presently the young angel re-appeared at the parapet. "I say, messire! I looked on the Register,—all popes are admitted here the moment they die, without inquiring into their private affairs, you know, so as to avoid any unfortunate scandal,—and we have a number of Pope Johns listed. But, sure enough, the mansion prepared for John the Twentieth is vacant. He seems to be the only pope that is not in Heaven."

"Why, but of course not," says Jurgen, complacently, "inasmuch as you see me, who was once Bishop of Rome and servant to the servants of God, standing down here on this cinder heap."

"Yes, but none of the others in your series appears to place you. John the Nineteenth says he never heard of you, and not to bother him in the middle of a harp lesson—"

"He died before my accession, naturally."

"—And John the Twenty-first says he thinks they lost count somehow, and that there never was any Pope John the Twentieth. He says you must be an impostor."

"Ah, professional jealousy!" sighed Jurgen: "dear me, this is very sad, and gives one a poor opinion of human nature. Now, my boy, I put it to you fairly, how could there have been a twenty-first unless there had been a twentieth? And what becomes of the great principle of papal infallibility when a pope admits to a mistake in elementary arithmetic? Oh, but this is a very dangerous heresy, let me tell you, an Inquisition matter, a consistory business! Yet, luckily, upon his own contention, this Pedro Juliani—"

"And that was his name, too, for he told me! You evidently know all about it, messire," said the young angel, visibly impressed.

"Of course, I know all about it. Well, I repeat, upon his own contention this man is nonexistent, and so, whatever he may say amounts to nothing. For he tells you there was never any Pope John the Twentieth: and either he is lying or he is telling you the truth. If he is lying, you, of course, ought not to believe him: yet, if he is telling you the truth, about there never having been any Pope John the Twentieth, why then, quite plainly, there was never any Pope John the Twenty-first, so that this man asserts his own nonexistence; and thus is talking nonsense, and you, of course, ought not to believe in nonsense. Even did we grant his insane contention that he is nobody, you are too well brought up, I am sure, to dispute that nobody tells lies in Heaven: it follows that in this case nobody is lying; and so, of course, I must be telling the truth, and you have no choice except to believe me."

"Now, certainly that sounds all right," the younger Jurgen conceded: "though you explain it so quickly it is a little difficult to follow you."

"Ah, but furthermore, and over and above this, and as a tangible proof of the infallible particularity of every syllable of my assertion," observes the elder Jurgen, "if you will look in the garret of Heaven you will find the identical ladder upon which I descended hither, and which I directed them to lay aside until I was ready to come up again. Indeed, I was just about to ask you to fetch it, inasmuch as my business here is satisfactorily concluded."

Well, the boy agreed that the word of no pope, whether in Hell or Heaven, was tangible proof like a ladder: and again he was off. Jurgen waited, in tolerable confidence.

It was a matter of logic. Jacob's Ladder must from all accounts have been far too valuable to throw away after one night's use at Beth-El; it would come in very handy on Judgment Day: and Jurgen's knowledge of Lisa enabled him to deduce that anything which was being kept because it might come in handy some day would inevitably be stored in the garret, in any establishment imaginable by women. "And it is notorious that Heaven is a delusion of old women. Why, the thing is a certainty," said Jurgen; "simply a mathematical certainty."

And events proved his logic correct: for presently the younger Jurgen came back with Jacob's Ladder, which was rather cob-

webby and obsolete looking after having been laid aside so long.

"So you see you were perfectly right," then said this younger Jurgen, as he lowered Jacob's Ladder into Hell. "Oh, Messire John, do hurry up and have it out with that old fellow who slandered you!"

Thus it came about that Jurgen clambered merrily from Hell to Heaven upon a ladder of unalloyed, time-tested gold: and, as he climbed, the shirt of Nessus glittered handsomely in the light which shone from Heaven: and by this great light above him, as Jurgen mounted higher and yet higher, the shadow of Jurgen was lengthened beyond belief along the sheer white wall of Heaven, as though the shadow were reluctant and adhered tenaciously to Hell. Yet by and by Jurgen leaped the ramparts: and then the shadow leaped too; and so his shadow came with Jurgen into Heaven, and huddled dispiritedly at Jurgen's feet.

"Well, well!" thinks Jurgen, "certainly there is no disputing the magic of the Master Philologist when it is correctly employed. For through its aid I am entering alive into Heaven, as only Enoch and Elijah have done before me: and moreover, if this boy is to be believed, one of the very handsomest of Heaven's many mansions awaits my occupancy. One could not ask more of any magician fairly. Aha, if only Lisa could see me now!"

That was his first thought. Afterwards Jurgen tore up the cantrap and scattered its fragments as the Master Philologist had directed. Then Jurgen turned to the boy who aided Jurgen to get into Heaven.

"Come, youngster, and let us have a good look at you!"

And Jurgen talked with the boy that he had once been, and stood face to face with all that Jurgen had been and was not any longer. And this was the one happening which befell Jurgen that the writer of the tale lacked heart to tell of.

So Jurgen quitted the boy that he had been. But first had Jurgen learned that in this place his grandmother Steinvor (whom King Smoit had loved) abode and was happy in her notion of Heaven; and that about her were her notions of her children and of her grandchildren. Steinvor had never imagined her husband in Heaven, nor King Smoit either.

"That is a circumstance," says Jurgen, "which heartens me to hope

one may find justice here. Yet I shall keep away from my grandmother, the Steinvor whom I knew and loved, and who loved me so blindly that this boy here is her notion of me. Yes, in mere fairness to her, I must keep away."

So he avoided that part of Heaven wherein were his grandmother's illusions: and this was counted for righteousness in Jurgen. That part of Heaven smelt of mignonettes, and a starling was singing there.

OF COMPROMISES IN HEAVEN

JURGEN then went unhindered to where the God of Jurgen's grandmother sat upon a throne, beside a sea of crystal. A rainbow, made high and narrow like a window frame, so as to fit the throne, formed an archway in which He sat: at His feet burned seven lamps, and four remarkable winged creatures lay there chaunting softly, "Glory and honor and thanks to Him Who liveth forever!" In one hand of the God was a scepter, and in the other a large book with seven red spots on it.

There were twelve smaller thrones, without rainbows, upon each side of the God of Jurgen's grandmother, in two semicircles: upon these inferior thrones sat benignant-looking elderly angels, with long white hair, all crowned, and clothed in white robes, and having a harp in one hand, and in the other a gold flask, about pint size. And everywhere fluttered and glittered the multicolored wings of seraphs and cherubs, like magnified parakeets, as they went softly and gaily about the golden haze that brooded over Heaven, to a continuous sound of hushed organ music and a remote and incomprehensible singing.

Now the eyes of this God met the eyes of Jurgen: and Jurgen waited thus for a long while, and far longer, indeed, than Jurgen suspected.

"I fear You," Jurgen said, at last: "and, yes, I love You; and yet I cannot believe. Why could You not let me believe, where so many believed? Or, else, why could You not let me deride, as the remainder derided so noisily? O God, why could You not let me have faith? for You gave me no faith in anything, not even in nothingness. It was not fair."

And in the highest court of Heaven, and in plain view of all the angels, Jurgen began to weep.

"I was not ever your God, Jurgen."

"Once very long ago," said Jurgen, "I had faith in You."

"No, for that boy is here with Me, as you yourself have seen. And to-day there is nothing remaining of him anywhere in the man that is Jurgen."

"God of my grandmother! God Whom I too loved in boyhood!" said Jurgen then: "why is it that I am denied a God? For I have searched: and nowhere can I find justice, and nowhere can I find anything to worship."

"What, Jurgen, and would you look for justice, of all places, in Heaven?"

"No," Jurgen said; "no, I perceive it cannot be considered here. Else You would sit alone."

"And for the rest, you have looked to find your God without, not looking within to see that which is truly worshiped in the thoughts of Jurgen. Had you done so, you would have seen, as plainly as I now see, that which alone you are able to worship. And your God is maimed: the dust of your journeying is thick upon him: your vanity is laid as a napkin upon his eyes: and in his heart is neither love nor hate, not even for his only worshiper."

"Do not deride him, You Who have so many worshipers! At least, he is a monstrous clever fellow," said Jurgen: and boldly he said it, in the highest court of Heaven, and before the pensive face of the God of Jurgen's grandmother.

"Ah, very probably. I do not meet with many clever people. And, as for My numerous worshipers, you forget how often you have demonstrated that I was the delusion of an old woman."

"Well, and was there ever a flaw in my logic?"

"I was not listening to you, Jurgen. You must know that logic does not much concern us, inasmuch as nothing is logical hereabouts."

And now the four winged creatures ceased their chaunting, and the organ music became a far-off murmuring. There was silence in Heaven. And the God of Jurgen's grandmother, too, was silent for a while, and the rainbow under which He sat put off its seven colors and burned with an unendurable white that was tinged bluishly, while the God considered ancient things. Then in the silence this God began to speak.

Some years ago (said the God of Jurgen's grandmother) it was

reported to Koshchei that scepticism was abroad in his universe, and that one walked therein who would be contented with no rational explanation. "Bring me this infidel," says Koshchei: so they brought to him in the void a little bent gray woman in an old gray shawl. "Now, do you tell me why you will not believe," says Koshchei, "in things as they are."

Then the decent little bent gray woman answered civilly: "I do not know, sir, who you may happen to be. But, since you ask me, everybody knows that things as they are must be regarded as temporary afflictions, and as trials through which we are righteously condemned to pass, in order to attain to eternal life with our loved ones in Heaven."

"Ah, yes," said Koshchei, who made things as they are; "ah, yes, to be sure! and how did you learn of this?"

"Why, every Sunday morning the priest discoursed to us about Heaven, and of how happy we would be there after death."

"Has this woman died, then?" asked Koshchei.

"Yes, sir," they told him,—"recently. And she will believe nothing we explain to her, but demands to be taken to Heaven."

"Now, this is very vexing," Koshchei said, "and I cannot, of course, put up with such scepticism. That would never do. So why do you not convey her to this Heaven which she believes in, and thus make an end to the affair? What, and am I never to have any competent assistants? and is every trifle to be referred to me?"

"But, sir," they told him, "there is no such place."

Then Koshchei reflected. "It is certainly strange that a place which does not exist should be a matter of public knowledge in another place. Where does this woman come from?"

"From Earth," they told him.

"Where is that?" he asked: and they explained to him as well as they could.

"Oh, yes, over that way," Koshchei interrupted. "I remember. Now— But what is your name, woman who wish to go to Heaven?"

"Steinvor, sir: and if you please I am rather in a hurry to be with my children again. You see, I have not seen any of them for a long while."

"But stay," said Koshchei; "what is that which comes into this

woman's eyes as she speaks of her children?" They told him it was love.

"Did I create this love?" says Koshchei, who made things as they are. And they told him, no; and that there were many sorts of love, but that this especial sort was an illusion which women had invented for themselves, and which they exhibited in all dealings with their children. And Koshchei sighed.

"Do you tell me about your children," Koshchei then said to Steinvor: "and do you look at me as you talk, so that I may see your eyes."

So Steinvor talked of her children: and Koshchei, who made all things, listened very attentively. Of Coth she told him, of her only son, confessing Coth was the finest boy that ever lived,—"a little wild, sir, at first, but then you know what boys are,"—and telling of how well Coth had done in business life, as a highly competent champion and desperado, and of how he had risen to be an alderman. Koshchei, who made all things, seemed properly impressed. Then Steinvor talked of her daughters, of Imperia and Lindamira and Christine: of Imperia's beauty, and of Lindamira's bravery under the mishaps of an unlucky marriage, and of Christine's superlative housekeeping. "Fine women, sir, everyone of them, with children of their own! and to me they still seem such babies, bless them!" And the decent little bent gray woman laughed. "I have been very lucky in my children, sir, and in my grandchildren, too," she told Koshchei. "There is Jurgen, now, my Coth's boy! You may not believe it, sir, but there is a story I must tell you about Jurgen—" Thus she ran on very happily and proudly, while Koshchei, who made all things, listened, and watched the eyes of Steinvor.

Then privately Koshchei asked, "Are these children and grandchildren of Steinvor such as she reports?"

"No, sir," they told him privately.

So, as Steinvor talked, Koshchei devised illusions in accordance with that which Steinvor said, and created such children and grandchildren as she described. Male and female he created them standing behind Steinvor, and all were beautiful and stainless: and Koshchei gave life to these illusions.

Then Koshchei bade her turn about. She obeyed: and Koshchei was forgotten.

Well, Koshchei sat there alone in the void, looking not very happy, and looking puzzled, and drumming upon his knee, and staring at the little bent gray woman, who was busied with her children and grandchildren, and had forgotten all about him. "But surely, Lindamira," he hears Steinvor say, "we are not yet in Heaven."—"Ah, my dear mother," replies her illusion of Lindamira, "to be with you again is Heaven: and besides, it may be that Heaven is like this, after all."—"My darling child, it is sweet of you to say that, and exactly like you to say that. But you know very well that Heaven is fully described in the Book of Revelations, in the Bible, as the glorious place that Heaven is. Whereas, as you can see for yourself, around us is nothing at all, and no person at all except that very civil gentleman to whom I was just talking; and who, between ourselves, seems woefully uninformed about the most ordinary matters."

"Bring Earth to me," says Koshchei. This was done, and Koshchei looked over the planet, and found a Bible. Koshchei opened the Bible, and read the Revelation of St. John the Divine, while Steinvor talked with her illusions. "I see," said Koshchei. "The idea is a little garish. Still—!" So he replaced the Bible, and bade them put Earth, too, in its proper place, for Koshchei dislikes wasting anything. Then Koshchei smiled, and created Heaven about Steinvor and her illusions, and he made Heaven just such a place as was described in the book.

"And so, Jurgen, that was how it came about," ended the God of Jurgen's grandmother. "And Me also Koshchei created at that time, with the seraphim and the saints and all the blessed, very much as you see us: and, of course, he caused us to have been here always, since the beginning of time, because that, too, was in the book."

"But how could that be done?" says Jurgen, with brows puckering. "And in what way could Koshchei juggle so with time?"

"How should I know, since I am but the illusion of an old woman, as you have so frequently proved by logic? Let it suffice that whatever Koshchei wills, not only happens, but has already happened beyond the ancientest memory of man and his mother. How otherwise could he be Koshchei?"

"And all this," said Jurgen, virtuously, "for a woman who was not even faithful to her husband!"

"Oh, very probably!" said the God: "at all events, it was done for a woman who loved. Koshchei will do almost anything to humor love, since love is one of the two things which are impossible to Koshchei."

"I have heard that pride is impossible to Koshchei—"

The God of Jurgen's grandmother raised His white eyebrows. "What is pride? I do not think I ever heard of it before. Assuredly it is something that does not enter here."

"But why is love impossible to Koshchei?"

"Because Koshchei made things as they are, and day and night he contemplates things as they are. How, then, can Koshchei love anything?"

But Jurgen shook his sleek black head. "That I cannot understand at all. If I were imprisoned in a cell wherein was nothing except my verses I would not be happy, and certainly I would not be proud: but, even so, I would love my verses. I am afraid, sir, that I fall in more readily with the ideas of Grandfather Satan than with Yours; and without contradicting You, I cannot but wonder if what You reveal is true."

"And how should I know whether or not I speak the truth?" the God asked of him, "since I am but the illusion of an old woman, as you have so frequently proved by logic."

"Well, well!" said Jurgen, "You may be right in all matters, and certainly I cannot presume to say You are wrong: but still, at the same time—! No, even now I do not quite believe in You."

"What being anywhere expects belief, or any happiness begotten by faith, of this so clever Jurgen who sees through all the illusions of old women?"

But Jurgen answered stoutly:

"God of my grandmother, I cannot quite believe in You, and Your doings as they are recorded I find incoherent and a little droll. Yet I am glad the affair has been so arranged that You may always now be real to brave and gentle persons who have believed in and have worshiped and have loved You. To have disappointed them would have been unfair: and it is right that before the faith they had in You not even Koshchei who made things as they are was able to be at all reasonable.

"God of my grandmother, I cannot quite believe in You; but,

remembering the sum of love and faith that has been given You, I tremble. I think of the dear people whose living was confident and glad because of their faith in You: I think of them, and my heart is troubled with a blind contrition, and a yearning, and an enviousness, and yet a tender sort of amusement colors all. Oh, God, there was never any other deity who had such dear worshipers as You have had; and You should be very proud of them.

"God of my grandmother, I cannot quite believe in You, yet I am not as those who would come peering at You reasonably. I, Jurgen, see You only through a mist of tears. For You were loved by those whom I loved greatly a long while ago: and when I look at You it is Your worshipers and the dear believers of old that I remember. And it seems to me that dates and manuscripts and the opinions of learned persons are very trifling things beside what I remember, and what I envy!"

"Who could have expected such a monstrous clever fellow ever to envy the illusions of old women?" the God of Jurgen's grandmother asked now: and now His grave and glorious countenance was not unfriendly.

"Why, but," said Jurgen, on a sudden, "why, but my grandmother—in a way,—was right about Heaven and about You also. For certainly You seem to exist, and to reign in just such estate as she described. And yet, according to Your latest revelation, I too was right—in a way,—about these things being an old woman's delusions. So I must tell you that I wonder now—?"

"Yes, Jurgen?"

"Why, I wonder if everything is right, in a way? I wonder if that is the large secret of everything? It would not be a bad solution, sir," said Jurgen, meditatively.

The God smiled. Then suddenly that part of Heaven was vacant, except for Jurgen, who stood there quite alone. And before him was the throne of the vanished God and the scepter of the God, and Jurgen saw that the seven spots upon the great book were of red sealing wax.

Jurgen was afraid: but he was particularly appalled by his consciousness that he was not going to falter. "What, you who have been duke and prince and king and emperor and pope! and do such dignities content a Jurgen? Why, not at all," says Jurgen.

So Jurgen ascended the throne of Heaven, and sat beneath that wondrous rainbow: and in his lap now was the book, and in his hand was the scepter, of the God of Jurgen's grandmother.

Jurgen sat thus, for a long while regarding the bright vacant courts of Heaven. "And what will you do now?" says Jurgen, aloud. "Oh, fretful little Jurgen, you that have complained because you had not your desire, you are omnipotent over Earth and all the affairs of men. What now is your desire?" And sitting thus terribly enthroned, the heart of Jurgen was as lead within him, and he felt old and very tired. "For I do not know. Oh, nothing can help me, for I do not know what thing it is that I desire! And this book and this scepter and this throne avail me nothing at all, and nothing can ever avail me: for I am Jurgen who seeks he knows not what."

So Jurgen shrugged, and he climbed down from the throne of the God, and wandering at adventure, he came presently to four archangels. They were seated upon a fleecy cloud, and they were eating milk and honey from gold porringers: and of these radiant beings Jurgen inquired the quickest way out of Heaven.

"For hereabouts are none of my illusions," said Jurgen, "and I must now return to such illusions as are congenial. One must believe in something. And all that I have seen in Heaven I have admired and envied, but in none of these things could I believe, and with none of these things could I be satisfied. And while I think of it, I wonder now if any of you gentlemen can give me news of that Lisa who used to be my wife?"

He described her; and they regarded him with compassion.

But these archangels, he found, had never heard of Lisa, and they assured him there was no such person in Heaven. For Steinvor had died when Jurgen was a boy, and so she had never seen Lisa; and in consequence, had not thought about Lisa one way or the other, when Steinvor outlined her notions to Koshchei who made things as they are.

Now Jurgen discovered, too, that, when his eyes first met the eyes of the God of Jurgen's grandmother, Jurgen had stayed motionless for thirty-seven days, forgetful of everything save that the God of his grandmother was love.

"Nobody else has willingly turned away so soon," Zachariel

told him: "and we think that your insensibility is due to some evil virtue in the glittering garment which you are wearing, and of which the like was never seen in Heaven."

"I did but search for justice," Jurgen said: "and I could not find it in the eyes of your God, but only love and such forgiveness as troubled me."

"Because of that should you rejoice," the four archangels replied; "and so should all that lives rejoice: and the more particularly should we rejoice who dwell in Heaven, and who praise forever our Lord God's ignoring of justice, whereby we have entered into this place."

FROM

The Line of Love

LOVE-LETTERS OF FALSTAFF

OF *the ten stories in* The Line of Love *several are the earliest of Cabell's published compositions, and the first is "Love-Letters of Falstaff," written in 1901 when the author was twenty-two. With the boldness of youth the new writer recreates a known character and invents a situation not dreamed of by the original creator. Regarded merely as a* tour de force, *the performance is astonishingly mature in execution, and a reader at the time the story first appeared who had immediate perception and a bit of prophetic foreknowledge might have welcomed with assurance the arrival of a gifted if still evidently derivative story-teller. It is notable that Cabell in the bloom of his own youth caught the mood, which was to be repeated in his later writings, of wistful backward-yearning for an hour long past of actual happiness or the hope of happiness—the tragicomedy of lost illusions.*

J. M.

LOVE-LETTERS OF FALSTAFF

I

THERE was a sound of scuffling within as Sir John Falstaff—much broken since his loss of the King's favor, and now equally decayed in wit and health and reputation,—stood fumbling at the door of the Angel room. He was particularly shaky on this dismal day, after a night of particularly hard drinking.

But he came into the apartment singing, and, whatever the scuffling had meant, found Bardolph in one corner employed in sorting garments from a clothes-chest, while at the extreme end of the room Mistress Quickly demurely stirred the fire; which winked at the old knight rather knowingly.

"*Then came the bold Sir Caradoc,*" carolled Sir John. "Ah, mistress, what news?—*And eke Sir Pellinore.*—Did I rage last night, Bardolph? Was I a Bedlamite?"

"As mine own bruises can testify," Bardolph assented. "Had each one of them a tongue, they would raise a clamor beside which Babel were as an heir weeping for his rich uncle's death; their testimony would qualify you for any mad-house in England. And if their evidence go against the doctor's stomach, the watchman at the corner hath three teeth—or, rather, hath them no longer, since you knocked them out last night,—that will, right willingly, aid him to digest it."

"Three, say you?" asked the knight, rather stiffly lowering his great body into his great chair set ready for him beside the fire. "I would have my valor in all men's mouths, but not in this fashion, for it is too biting a jest. Three, say you? Well, I am glad it was no worse; I have a tender conscience, and that mad fellow of the north, Hotspur, sits heavily upon it, so that thus this Percy, being slain by my valor, is *per se* avenged, a plague on him! Three, say you? I would to God my name were not so terrible to the enemy as it is; I would I had 'bated my natural inclination somewhat, and

had slain less tall fellows by some threescore. I doubt Agamemnon slept not well o' nights. Three, say you? Give the fellow a crown apiece for his mouldy teeth, if thou hast them; if thou hast them not, bid him eschew this vice of drunkenness, whereby his misfortune hath befallen him, and thus win him heavenly crowns."

"Indeed, sir," began Bardolph, "I doubt—"

"Doubt not, sirrah!" cried Sir John, testily; and continued, in a virtuous manner: "Was not the apostle reproved for that same sin? Thou art a Didymus, Bardolph;—an incredulous paynim, a most unspeculative rogue! Have I carracks trading in the Indies? Have I robbed the exchequer of late? Have I the Golden Fleece for a cloak? Nay, it is paltry gimlet, and that augurs badly. Why, does this knavish watchman take me for a raven to feed him in the wilderness? Tell him there are no such ravens here about; else had I ravenously limed the house-tops and set springes in the gutters. Inform him that my purse is no better lined than his own broken skull; it is void as a beggar's protestations, or a butcher's stall in Lent; light as a famished gnat, or the sighing of a new-made widower; more empty than a last year's bird-nest, than a madman's eye, or, in fine, than the friendship of a king."

"But you have wealthy friends, Sir John," suggested the hostess of the Boar's Head Tavern, whose impatience had but very hardly waited for this opportunity to join in the talk. "Yes, I warrant you, Sir John. Sir John, you have a many wealthy friends; you cannot deny that, Sir John."

"Friends, dame?" asked the knight, and cowered closer to the fire, as though he were a little cold. "I have no friends since Hal is King. I had, I grant you, a few score of acquaintances whom I taught to lose at dice; paltry young blades of the City, very unfledged juvenals! Setting my knighthood and my valor aside, if I did swear friendship with these, I did swear to a lie. But this is a censorious and muddy-minded world, so that, look you, even these sprouting aldermen, these foul bacon-fed rogues, have fled my tutorings of late, and my reputation hath grown somewhat more murky than Erebus. No matter! I walk alone, as one that hath the pestilence. No matter! But I grow old; I am not in the vaward of my youth, mistress."

He nodded his head with extreme gravity; then reached for a cup of sack that Bardolph held at the knight's elbow.

"Indeed, I know not what your worship will do," said Mistress Quickly, rather sadly, "now that none come to be cheated, and nobody regards you but the sheriff's men."

"Faith!" answered Sir John, as he finished the large cup, and grinned without large merriment,—"faith, you dimity death-raven, unless that Providence which watches over the fall of a sparrow hath an eye to the career of Sir John Falstaff, Knight, and so speeds to my aid shortly, I must need convert my last doublet into a mask, and turn highwayman in my shirt. I can take purses yet, ye Uzzite comforters, as gaily as I did at Gadshill, where that scurvy Poins, and he that is now King, and some twoscore other knaves did afterward assault me in the dark; yet I peppered some of them, I warrant you!"

"You must be rid of me, then, master," Bardolph interpolated. "I for one have no need of a hempen collar."

"Ah, well!" said the knight,—and he now stretched himself luxuriously as the warmth of the alcohol coursed through his inert blood,—"I, too, would be loth to break the gallows' back! For fear of halters, we must alter our way of living; we must live close, Bardolph, till the wars make us Crœsuses or food for crows. And if Hal but hold to his bias, there will be wars: I will eat a piece of my sword, if he have not need of it shortly. Ah, go thy ways, tall Jack; there live not three good men unhanged in England, and one of them is fat and grows old. We must live close, Bardolph; we must forswear drinking and wenching! But there is lime in this sack, you rogue; give me another cup."

The old knight drained this second cup, and unctuously sucked at and licked his lips. Thereafter he continued happily:

"I pray you, hostess, remember that Doll Tearsheet lies with me to-night; have a capon of the best, and be not sparing of the wine. I will repay you, upon honor, when we young fellows return from France, all laden with rings and brooches and such trumperies like your Norfolkshire pedlars at Christmas-tide. We will sack a town for you, and bring you back the Lord Mayor's beard to stuff you a cushion; the Dauphin shall be your tapster yet; we will walk on lilies, I warrant you, to the tune of *Hey, then up go we!*"

"Indeed, sir," said Mistress Quickly, in perfect earnest, "your worship is as welcome to my pantry as the mice—a pox on 'em!—think themselves; you are heartily welcome. Ah, well, old Puss is dead; I had her of Goodman Quickly these ten years since;—but I had thought you looked for the lady who was here but now;—she was a roaring lion among the mice."

"What lady?" cried Sir John, with great animation. "Was it Flint the mercer's wife, think you? Ah, she hath a liberal disposition, and will, without the aid of Prince Houssain's carpet or the horse of Cambuscan, transfer the golden shining pieces from her husband's coffers to mine."

"No mercer's wife, I think," Mistress Quickly answered, after consideration. "She came with two patched footmen, and smacked of gentility;—Master Dumbleton's father was a mercer; but he had red hair;—she is old;—and I could never abide red hair."

"No matter!" cried the knight. "I can love this lady, be she a very Witch of Endor. Observe, what a thing it is to be a proper man, Bardolph! She hath marked me;—in public perhaps; on the street, it may be;—and then, I warrant you, made such eyes! and sighed such sighs! and lain awake o' nights, thinking of a pleasing portly gentleman, whom, were I not modesty's self, I might name;—and I, all this while, not knowing! Fetch me my Book of Riddles and my Sonnets, that I may speak smoothly. Why was my beard not combed this morning? No matter, it will serve. Have I no better cloak than this?" Sir John was in a tremendous bustle, all a-beam with pleasurable anticipation.

But Mistress Quickly, who had been looking out of the window, said, "Come, but your worship must begin with unwashed hands, for old Madam Wishfor't and her two country louts are even now at the door."

"Depart, minions!" cried the knight. "Avaunt! Conduct the lady hither, hostess; Bardolph, another cup of sac. We will ruffle it, lad, and go to France all gold, like Midas! Are mine eyes too red? I must look sad, you know, and sigh very pitifully. Ah, we will ruffle it! Another cup of sack, Bardolph;—I am a rogue if I have drunk to-day. And do you vanish! for this lady comes to be well tousled, and to pay well for it."

He threw himself into a gallant attitude, suggestive of one sud-

denly palsied, and with the dignity of a turkey-cock he strutted toward the door to greet his unknown visitor.

II

The woman who entered was not the jolly City dame one looked for: and, at first sight, you estimated her age upon the staider side of sixty. But to this woman the years had shown unwonted kindliness, as though time touched her less with intent to mar than to caress; her form was unbent, her eyes stayed brightly blue, and her countenance, although pale and deeply furrowed, bore the traces of great beauty; and, whatever the nature of her errand, the woman who stood in the doorway was unquestionably a person of breeding.

Sir John advanced toward her with as much elegance as he might muster; for gout when coupled with such excessive bulk does not beget an overpowering amount of grace.

"*See, from the glowing East, Aurora comes,*" he chirped. "Madam, permit me to welcome you to my poor apartments; they are not worthy—"

"I would see Sir John Falstaff, sir," declared the lady, courteously, but with some reserve of manner, and looking him full in the face as she said this.

"Indeed, madam," suggested Sir John, "if those bright eyes—whose glances have already cut my poor heart into as many pieces as the man in the front of the almanac,—will but desist for a moment from such butcher's work and do their proper duty, you will have little trouble in finding the bluff soldier you seek."

"Are you Sir John?" asked the lady, as though suspecting a jest. "The son of old Sir Edward Falstaff, of Norfolk?"

"His wife has frequently assured me so," Sir John replied; "and to confirm her evidence I have about me a certain villainous thirst that did plague Sir Edward sorely in his lifetime, and came to me with other chattels. The property I have expended long since; but no Jew will advance one farthing on the Falstaff thirst. It is a priceless commodity, not to be bought or sold; you might as soon quench it."

"I would not have known you," said the lady, wonderingly; "but," she added, "I have not seen you these forty years."

"Faith, madam," grinned the knight, "the great pilferer Time hath since then taken away a little from my hair, and added somewhat (saving your presence) to my belly; and my face hath not been improved by being the grindstone for some hundred swords. But I do not know you."

"I am Sylvia Vernon," said the lady. "And once, a long while ago, I was Sylvia Darke."

"I remember," said the knight.

His voice was altered. Bardolph would hardly have known it; nor, perhaps, would he have recognized his master's manner as Sir John now handed Dame Sylvia to the best chair.

"A long while ago," she repeated, sadly, after a pause during which the crackling of the fire was very audible. "Time hath dealth harshly with us both, John;—the name hath a sweet savor. I am an old woman now. And you—"

"I would not have known you," said Sir John; then asked, almost resentfully, "What do you here?"

"My son goes to the wars," she answered, "and I am come to bid him farewell; yet I should not tarry in London, for my lord is feeble and hath constant need of me. But I, an old woman, am yet vain enough to steal these few moments from him who needs me, to see for the last time, mayhap, him who was once my very dear friend."

"I was never your friend, Sylvia," said Sir John.

"Ah, the old wrangle!" said the lady, and smiled a little wistfully. "My dear and honored lover, then; and I am come to see him here."

"Ay!" interrupted Sir John, rather hastily; and he proceeded, glowing with benevolence: "A quiet, orderly place, where I bestow my patronage; the woman of the house had once a husband in my company. God rest his soul! he bore a good pike. He retired in his old age and 'stablished this tavern, where he passed his declining years, till death called him gently away from this naughty world. God rest his soul, say I!"

This was a somewhat euphemistic version of the taking-off of Goodman Quickly, who had been knocked over the head with a joint-stool while rifling the pockets of a drunken guest; but perhaps Sir John wished to speak well of the dead, even at the price of con-

ferring upon the present home of Sir John an idyllic atmosphere denied it by the London constabulary.

"And you for old memories' sake yet aid his widow?" the lady murmured. "That is like you, John."

There was another silence, and the fire crackled more loudly than ever.

"And are you sorry that I come again, in a worse body, John, strange and time-ruined?"

"Sorry?" echoed Sir John; and, ungallant as it was, he hesitated for a moment before replying: "No, faith! But there are some ghosts that will not easily bear raising, and you have raised one."

"We have summoned up no very fearful spectre, I think," replied the lady; "at most, no worse than a paliid, gentle spirit that speaks —to me, at least,—of a boy and a girl who loved each other and were wholly happy a great while ago."

"And are you come hither to seek that boy?" Sir John returned, —"the boy that went mad and rhymed about you in those far-off dusty years? Nay; he is quite dead, my lady: he was drowned, mayhap, in a cup of wine. Or he was slain, perchance, by a few light women. I know not how he died. But he is as dead as Hannibal or Balaam; and I had not been haunted by his ghost until to-day."

He stared at the floor as he ended; then choked, and broke into a fit of coughing which unromantic chance brought on just now, of all times.

"He was a dear boy," she said, presently; "a boy who loved a young maid very truly; a boy that found the maid's father too strong and shrewd for desperate young lovers—Eh, how long ago it seems, and what a flood of tears the poor maid shed at being parted from that dear boy!"

"Faith!" admitted Sir John, "the rogue had his good points."

"Ah, John, you have not forgotten, I know," the lady said, looking up into his face, "and you will believe me that I am very heartily sorry for the pain I brought into your life?"

"My wounds heal easily," said. Sir John.

"For, though my dear dead father was too wise for us, and knew it was for the best that I should not accept your love, believe me,

John, I always knew the value of that love, and have held it an honor that any woman must prize."

"Dear lady," the knight suggested, with a slight grimace, "the world is not altogether of your opinion."

"I know not of the world," she said; "for we live away from it. But we have heard of you ever and anon; I have your life quite letter-perfect for these forty years or more."

"You have heard of me?" asked Sir John; and, for a seasoned knave, he looked rather uncomfortable.

"As a gallant and brave soldier," she answered; "of how you fought at sea with Mowbray that was afterward Duke of Norfolk; of your knighthood by King Richard; of how you slew the Percy at Shrewsbury; and captured Coleville o' late in Yorkshire; and how the Prince, that now is King, did love you above all men; and, in fine, of many splendid doings in the great world."

Sir John raised a protesting hand. He said, with commendable modesty:

"I have fought somewhat. But we are not Bevis of Southampton; we have slain no giants. Heard you naught else?"

"Little else of note," replied the lady; and went on, very quietly: "But we are proud of you at home in Norfolk. And such tales as I have heard I have woven together in one story; and I have told it many times to my children as we sat on the old Chapel steps at evening, and the shadows lengthened across the lawn, and I bid them emulate this, the most perfect knight and gallant gentleman that I have known. And they love you, I think, though but by repute."

Once more a silence fell. Sir John then asked,—

"Do you yet live at Winstead?"

"Yes," she answered; "in the old house. It is little changed, but there are many changes about."

By and by he said, "Is Moll yet with you that did once carry our letters?"

"Married to Hodge, the tanner," Dame Sylvia told him; "and dead long since."

"And all our merry company?" Sir John demanded, after yet another silence. "Marian? And Tom and little Osric? And Phyllis? And Adelais? Zounds, it is like a breath of country air to speak their names once more."

"All dead," she answered, in a hushed voice, "save Adelais, and even to me poor Adelais seems old and strange. Walter was slain in the French wars; and she hath never married."

"All dead," Sir John informed the fire, as if confidentially; then he laughed, though his bloodshot eyes were not merry. "This same death hath a wide maw! It is not long before you and I, my lady, will be at supper with the worms. But you, at least, have had a happy life."

"I have been content enough," she said, "but all that seems run by; for, John, I think that at our age we are not any longer very happy nor very miserable."

"Faith!" agreed Sir John, "we are both old; and I had not known it, my lady, until to-day."

Again there was silence; and to Sir John, looking rather moodily downward, it appeared that the fire leapt as if with delight over some jest or another.

Sylvia Vernon arose suddenly and cried out, "I would I had not come!"

Then said Sir John: "Nay, this is but a feeble grieving which you have awakened, and a dim wondering, that all youth's gold must rust. We may not weep for it. For, madam—you whom I loved once!—you are in the right. Our blood runs quietlier now than was the way of it upon April evenings which we two remember; and we may no longer, I think, either sorrow or rejoice very deeply."

"It is true," she said; "but I must go; and, indeed, I would to God I had not come!"

Sir John was silent; he bowed his head, in acquiescence perhaps, in meditation it may have been; but he stayed silent.

"Yet," said she, "there is something here which I must keep no longer: for here are all the letters you ever writ me."

Whereupon she handed Sir John a little packet of quaintly old and faded papers. He turned them awkwardly in his hand once or twice; then stared at them; then at the lady.

"You, Sylvia, have kept them—always!"

"Yes," she responded, wistfully; "but I must not be guilty of continuing such follies. It is a villainous example to my grandchildren," Dame Sylvia told him, and smiled. "Farewell."

Sir John drew close to her, and he took both her hands. He looked into her eyes for an instant, holding himself very erect,—and it was a rare event when Sir John looked anyone squarely in the eyes,—and he said, wonderingly, "How I loved you!"

"I know," she murmured. Sylvia Vernon gazed up into his bloated old face with a proud tenderness that was half-regretful. A quavering came into her gentle voice. "And I thank you for your gift, my lover,—O brave true lover, whose love I was not ever ashamed to own! Farewell, my dear; yet a little while, and I go to seek the boy and girl we know of."

"I shall not be long, madam," said Sir John. "Speak a kind word for me in Heaven; for I shall have sore need of it."

She had reached the door by this time. "You are not sorry that I came?"

Sir John answered, very sadly: "There are many wrinkles now in your dear face, my lady; the great eyes are a little dimmed, and the sweet laughter is a little cracked; but I am not sorry to have seen you thus. For I have loved no woman truly save you alone; and I am not sorry. Farewell." And for a moment he bowed his unreverend gray head over her shrivelled fingers.

III

"Lord, Lord, how subject we old men are to the vice of lying!" chuckled Sir John, and leaned back rheumatically in his chair and mumbled over the jest.

"Yet it was not all a lie," he confided, as if in perplexity, to the fire; "but what a coil over a youthful green-sickness 'twixt a lad and a wench some two score years ago!

"I might have had money of her for the asking," he presently went on; "yet I am glad I did not; which is a parlous sign and smacks of dotage."

He nodded very gravely over this new and alarming phase of his character.

"Were it not a quaint conceit, a merry tickle-brain of Fate," he asked of the leaping flames, after a still longer pause, "that this mountain of malmsey were once a delicate stripling with apple cheeks and a clean breath, smelling of civet, and as mad for love, I warrant you, as any Amadis of them all? For, if a man were to speak truly, I did love her.

"I had the special marks of the pestilence," he assured a particularly incredulous- and obstinate-looking coal,—a grim, black fellow that, lurking in a corner, lowered forbiddingly, and seemed to defy both the flames and Sir John. "Not all the flagons and apples in the universe might have comforted me. I was wont to sigh like a leaky bellows; to weep like a wench that hath lost her grandfather; to spice my talking with the fag-ends of ballads like a man milliner; and I did, moreover, indite sonnets, and canzonets, and what not other toys, of mine own elaboration.

"And Moll did carry them," he continued; "plump, brown-eyed Moll, that hath married Hodge the tanner, and reared her tannerkins, and died long since."

But the coal remained incredulous, and the flames crackled merrily.

"Lord, Lord, what did I not write?" said Sir John, drawing out a paper from the packet; and he bent down so that he might decipher in the firelight the faded writing.

Read Sir John:

"'Have pity, Sylvia!' Cringing at thy door
Entreats with dolorous cry and clamoring,
That mendicant who quits thee nevermore;
Now winter chills the world, and no birds sing
In any woods, yet as in wanton Spring
He follows thee; and never will have done,
Though nakedly he die, from following
Whither thou leadest.

"Canst thou look upon
His woes, and laugh to see a goddess' son
Of wide dominion, and in strategy
More strong than Jove, more wise than Solomon,
Thus beggared and betricked, at last, by thee?
Have pity, Sylvia! And let love be one
Among the folk that bear thee company.

"Is it not the very puling speech of your true lover?" he chuckled; and the flames sputtered assent. *"Among the folk that bear thee company,"* he repeated, and afterward looked about him with a smack of gravity. "Faith, Adam Cupid hath forsworn my fellow-

ship long since; he hath no score chalked up against him at the Boar's Head Tavern; or, if he have, I doubt not the next street-beggar might discharge it.

"And she hath commended me to her children as a very gallant gentleman and a true knight," Sir John went on, reflectively. He cast his eyes toward the ceiling, and grinned at invisible deities. "Jove that sees all hath a goodly commodity of mirth; I doubt not his sides ache at times, as if they had conceived another wine-god.

"Yet, by my honor," he insisted to the fire; then added, apologetically,—"if I had any, which, to speak plain, I have not,—I am glad; it is a brave jest; and I did love her once," said the infirm, bloat rogue, as he unfolded yet another paper.

"'*My dear lady,—That I am not with thee now is, indeed, no fault of mine; for Sir Thomas Mowbray hath need of me, he saith. Yet the service that I have rendered him thus far is but to cool my heels in his antechamber and dream of two great eyes and of that net of golden hair wherewith Lord Love hath lately snared my poor heart. For it comforts me—*' And so on, and so on, the pen trailing most juvenal sugar, like a fly newly crept out of the honey-pot. And ending with a posy, filched, I warrant you, from some ring.

"I remember when I did write her this," he explained to the fire. "Lord, Lord, if the fire of grace were not quite out of me, now should I be moved. For I did write it; and it was sent with a sonnet, all of Hell, and Heaven, and your pagan gods, and other tricks of speech. It should be somewhere."

He fumbled with uncertain fingers among the papers. "Ah, here it is," he said at last, and he again began to read aloud.

Read Sir John:

"Cupid invaded Hell, and boldly drove
Before him all the hosts of Erebus,
Till he had conquered: and grim Cerberus
Sang madrigals, the Furies rhymed of love,
Old Charon sighed, and sonnets rang above
The gloomy Styx; and even as Tantalus
Was Proserpine discrowned in Tartarus,
And Cupid regnant in the place thereof.

"Thus Love is monarch throughout Hell to-day;
In Heaven we know his power was always great;
And Earth acclaimed Love's mastery straightway
When Sylvia came to gladden Earth's estate:—
Thus Hell and Heaven and Earth his rule obey,
And Sylvia's heart alone is obdurate.

"Well, well," sighed Sir John, "it was a goodly rogue that writ it, though the verse runs but lamely! A goodly rogue!

"He might," Sir John suggested, tentatively, "have lived cleanly, and forsworn sack; he might have been a gallant gentleman, and begotten grandchildren, and had a quiet nook at the ingleside to rest his old bones: but he is dead long since. He might have writ himself *armigero* in many a bill, or obligation, or quittance, or what not, he might have left something behind him save unpaid tavern bills; he might have heard cases, harried poachers, and quoted old saws; and slept in his own family chapel through sermons yet unwrit, beneath his presentment, done in stone, and a comforting bit of Latin: but he is dead long since."

Sir John sat meditating for a while; it had grown quite dark in the room as he muttered to himself. He rose now, rather cumbrously and uncertainly, but with a fine rousing snort of indignation.

"Zooks!" he said, "I prate like a death's-head. A thing done hath an end, God have mercy on us all! And I will read no more of the rubbish."

He cast the packet into the heart of the fire; the yellow papers curled at the edges, rustled a little, and blazed; he watched them burn to the last spark.

"A cup of sack to purge the brain!" cried Sir John, and filled one to the brim. "And I will go sup with Doll Tearsheet."

FROM

Gallantry

SIMON'S HOUR

THE *scenes of the stories in* Gallantry *are all laid in the heart of the eighteenth century, if that era which begins in the age of the Restoration and runs vaguely into the age of Romanticism, can be said to have a heart. Yet there was heart, deep, tender, even noble emotion, in the worldly artificial people of the time —"mundicidious," happening in this world, is the rare word that Cabell exhumes from the dictionary—for they were human beings and their passions were hot under the cool exterior of their come-day-go-day superficiality. The veneer of cynicism covers a stout and often fine-grained wood, however it is worm-eaten with what they, as well as we, call "immorality." In "Simon's Hour," the first story in* Gallantry, *the better nature of a degenerate man triumphs for a final moment. But that is to point a moral for a tale that tells itself and needs no ethical adornment.*

J. M.

SIMON'S HOUR

Proem: *The Age and a Product of It*

We begin at a time when George the Second was permitting Ormskirk and the Pelhams to govern England; when the Jacobites had not yet ceased to hope for another Stuart Restoration, and Mr. Washington was a promising young surveyor in the most loyal colony of Virginia; when abroad the Marquise de Pompadour ruled France and all its appurtenances, and the King of Prussia and the Empress Maria Theresa had, between them, set entire Europe by the ears; when at home the ladies, if rumor may be credited, were less unapproachable than their hoop-petticoats caused them to appear,[1] and when gentlemen wore swords, and some of the more reckless bloods were daringly beginning to discard the Ramillie tie and the pigtail for their own hair; when politeness was obligatory, and morality a matter of taste; and when well-bred people went about the day's work with ample leisure and very few scruples. In fine, we begin toward the first of March, in the year 1750, when Lady Allonby and her brother, Mr. Henry Heleigh, of Trevor's Folly, were the guests of Lord Rokesle, at Stornoway Crag, on Usk.

As any person of the polite world could have informed you, Anastasia Allonby was the widow (by his second marriage) of Lord Stephen Allonby, the Marquis of Falmouth's younger brother; and it was conceded by the most sedate that Lord Stephen's widow, in consideration of her liberal jointure, possessed inordinate comeliness.

She was tall for a woman. Her hair, to-night unpowdered, had the color of amber and something, too, of its glow; her eyes, though not profound, were large and in hue varied, as the light fell or

[1] "Oft have we known that sevenfold fence to fail,
Though stiff with hoops, and armed with ribs of whale."

her emotions shifted, through a wide gamut of blue shades. But it was her mouth you remembered: the fullness and brevity of it, the deep indentation of its upper lip, the curves of it and its vivid crimson—these roused you to wildish speculation as to its probable softness when chance and Anastasia Allonby were beyond ordinary indulgent.

Pink was the color most favorable to her complexion, and this she wore to-night; the gown was voluminous, with a profusion of lace; and it candidly offered large opportunities to appraise her neck and bosom. Lady Allonby had no reason to be ashamed of either possession, and the last mode in these matters was not prudish.

To such a person, enters Simon Orts, chaplain in ordinary to Lord Rokesle, and Vicar of Heriz Magna, one of Lord Rokesle's livings.

§ 1

"Now of a truth," said Simon Orts, "that is curious,—undeniably that is curious."

He stayed at the door for a moment, staring back into the ill-lit corridor. Presently he shut the door, and came forward toward the fireplace.

Lady Allonby, half hidden in the depths of the big chair beside the chimney piece, a book in her lap, looked up inquiringly. "What is curious, Mr. Orts?"

The clergyman stood upon the hearth, warming his hands, and diffusing an odor of tobacco and stale alcohol. "Faith, that damned rascal—I beg your pardon, Anastasia; our life upon Usk is not conducive to a mincing nicety of speech. That rascal, Punshon, made some difficulty over admitting me; you might have taken him for a sentinel, with Stornoway in a state of siege. He ruffled me,—and I don't like it," Simon Orts said, reflectively, looking down upon her. "No, I don't like it. Where's your brother?" he demanded on a sudden.

"Harry and Lord Rokesle are at cards, I believe. And Mrs. Morfit has retired to her apartments with one of her usual headaches, so that I have been alone these two hours. You visit Stornoway somewhat late, Mr. Orts," Anastasia Allonby added, without

any particular concealment of the fact that she considered his doing so a nuisance.

He jerked his thumb ceilingward. "The cloth is at any rascal's beck and call. Old Holles, my Lord's man, is dying up yonder, and the whim seized him to have a clergyman in. God knows why, for it appears to me that one knave might very easily make his way to hell without having another knave to help him. And Holles?—eh, well, from what I myself know of him, the rogue is triply damned." His mouth puckered as he set about unbuttoning his long, rain-spattered cloak, which, with his big hat, he flung aside upon a table. "Gad!" said Simon Orts, "we are most of us damned on Usk; and that is why I don't like it—" He struck his hand against his thigh. "I don't like it, Anastasia."

"You must pardon me," she languidly retorted, "but I was never good at riddles."

He turned and glanced about the hall, debating. Lady Allonby meanwhile regarded him, as she might have looked at a frog or a hurtless snake. A small, slim, anxious man, she found him; always fidgeting, always placating someone, but never without a covert sneer. The fellow was venomous; his eyes only were honest, for, even while his lips were about their wheedling, these eyes flashed malice at you; and their shifting was so unremittent that afterward you recalled them as an absolute shining which had not any color. On Usk and thereabouts they said it was the glare from within of his damned soul, already at white heat; but they were a plain-spoken lot on Usk. To-night Simon Orts was all in black; and his hair, too, and his gross eyebrows were black, and well-nigh to the cheek bones of his clean-shaven countenance the thick beard showed everywhere through the skin with a subdued blackness.

Now he kept silence for a lengthy interval, his arms crossed on his breast, gnawing meanwhile at the finger nails of his left hand in an unattractive fashion he had of meditating. When words came it was in a torrent.

"I will read you my riddle, then. You are a widow, rich; as women go, you are not so unpleasant to look at as most of 'em. If it became a clerygman to dwell upon such matters, I would say that your fleshy habitation is too fine for its tenant, since I know you to be a good-for-nothing jilt. However, you are God's handi-

work, and doubtless He had His reasons for constructing you. My Lord is poor; last summer at Tunbridge you declined to marry him. I am in his confidence, you observe. He took your decision in silence,—'ware Rokesle when he is quiet! Eh, I know the man,—'tisn't for nothing that these ten years past I have studied his whims, pampered his vanity, lied to him, toadied him! You admire my candor?—faith, yes, I am very candid. I am Rokesle's hanger-on; he took me out of the gutter, and in my fashion I am grateful. And you?—Anastasia, had you treated me more equitably fifteen years ago, I would have gone to the stake for you, singing; now I don't value you the flip of a farthing. But, for old time's sake, I warn you. You and your brother are Rokesle's guests—on Usk! Harry Heleigh [1] can handle a sword, I grant you,—but you are on Usk! And Mrs. Morfit is here to play propriety,—propriety on Usk, God save the mark! And, besides, Rokesle, as the phrase runs, can twist his sister about his little finger—And I find sentinels at the door! I don't like it, Anastasia. In his way Rokesle loves you; more than that, a marriage with your jointure would retrieve his battered fortunes; and the name of my worthy patron, I regret to say, is not likely ever to embellish the Calendar of Saints."

Simon Orts paused with a short laugh. The woman had risen to her feet, her eyes widening and a thought troubled, though her lips smiled contemptuously.

"La, I should have comprehended that this late in the evening you would be in no condition to converse with ladies. Believe me, though, Mr. Orts, I would be glad to credit your warning to officious friendliness, were it not that the odor about your person compels me to attribute it to gin."

"Oh, I have been drinking," he conceded; "I have been drinking with a most commendable perseverance for these fifteen years. But at present I am far from drunk." Simon Orts took a turn about the hall; in an instant he faced her with an odd, almost tender smile. "You adorable, empty-headed, pink and white fool, what madness induced you to come to Usk? You know that Rokesle wants you; you know that you don't mean to marry him. Then why come to Usk? Do you know who is king in this sea-washed scrap of earth?—

[1] Henry Heleigh, thirteenth Earl of Brudenel, who succeeded his cousin the twelfth Earl in 1759, and lived to a great age. Bavois, writing in 1797, calls him "a very fine, strong old gentleman."

Rokesle. German George reigns yonder in England, but here, in the Isle of Usk, Vincent Floyer is king. And it is not precisely a convent that he directs. The men of Usk, I gather, after ten years' experience in the administering of spiritual consolation hereabouts,"—and the discolored broken teeth of Simon Orts made their appearance in honor of the jest,—"are part fisherman, part smuggler, part pirate, and part devil. Since the last ingredient predominates, they have no very unreasonable apprehension of hell, and would cheerfully invade it if Rokesle bade 'em do so. As I have pointed out, my worthy patron is subject to the frailties of the flesh. Oh, I am candid, for if you report me to his Lordship I shall lie out of it. I have had practice enough to do it handsomely. But Rokesle—do you know what Rokesle is—?"

The Vicar of Heriz Magna would have gone on, but Lady Allonby had interrupted, her cheeks flaming. "Yes, yes," she cried; "I know him to be a worthy gentleman. 'Tis true I could not find it in my heart to marry him, yet I am proud to rank Lord Rokesle among my friends." She waved her hand toward the chimney piece, where hung the sword of Aluric Floyer,[1] the founder of the house of Rokesle. "Do you see that old sword, Mr. Orts? The man who wielded it long ago was a gallant gentleman and a stalwart captain. And my Lord, as he told me but on Thursday afternoon, hung it there that he might always have in mind the fact that he bore the name of this man, and must bear it meritoriously. My Lord is a gentleman. La, believe me, if you, too, were a gentleman, Mr. Orts, you would understand! But a gentleman is not a talebearer; a gentleman does not defame any person behind his back, far less the person to whom he owes his daily bread."

"So he has been gulling you?" said Simon Orts; then he added quite inconsequently: "I had not thought anything you could say would hurt me. I discover I was wrong. Perhaps I am not a gentleman. Faith, no; I am only a shabby drunkard, a disgrace to my cloth, am I not, Anastasia? Accordingly, I fail to perceive what old Aluric Floyer has to do with the matter in hand. He was reasonably virtuous, I suppose; putting aside a disastrous appetite for fruit, so was Adam: but, viewing their descendants, I ruefully admit that in each case the strain has deteriorated."

[1] This sword is now at Hadley.

There was a brief silence; then Lady Allonby observed: "Perhaps I was discourteous. I ask your forgiveness, Mr. Orts. And now, if you will pardon the suggestion, I think you had better go to your dying parishioner."

But she had touched the man to the quick. "I am a drunkard; who made me so? Who was it used to cuddle me with so many soft words and kisses—yes, kisses, my Lady!—till a wealthier man came a-wooing, and then flung me aside like an old shoe?"

This drenched her cheeks with crimson. "I think we had better not refer to that boy-and-girl affair. You cannot blame me for your debauched manner of living. I found before it was too late that I did not love you. I was only a girl, and 'twas natural that at first I should be mistaken in my fancies."

The Vicar caught her by each wrist. "You don't understand, of course. You never understood, for you have no more heart than one of those pink and white bisque figures that you resemble. 'You don't love me, and therefore I will go to the devil' may not be an all-rational deduction, but 'tis very human logic. You don't understand that, do you, Anastasia? You don't understand how when one is most miserable one remembers that at the bottom of a wineglass—or even at the bottom of a tumbler of gin,—one may come upon happiness, or at least upon acquiescence to whatever the niggling gods may send. You don't understand how one remembers, when the desired woman is lost, that there are other women whose lips are equally red and whose hearts are far more tender, and whose notions about virtue are less exigent. No; women never understand these things: and in any event, you would not understand, because you are only an adorable pink and white fool."

"Oh, oh!" she cried, struggling. "How dare you? You insult me, you coward!"

"Well, you can always comfort yourself with the reflection that it scarcely matters what a sot like me may elect to say. And, since you understand me now no more than formerly, Anastasia, I tell you that the lover turned adrift may well profit by the example of his predecessors. Other lovers have been left forsaken, both in trousers and in ripped petticoats; and I have heard that when Chryseis was reft away from Agamemnon, the *anax andrôn* made himself tolerably comfortable with Briseis; and that, when Theseus

sneaked off in the night, Ariadne, after having wept for a decent period, managed in the ultimate to console herself with Theban Bacchus,—which I suppose to be a poetic method of stating that the daughter of Minos took to drink. So the forsaken lover has his choice of consolation—in wine or in that dearer danger, woman. I have tried both, Anastasia. And I tell you—"

He dropped her hands as though they had been embers. Lord Rokesle had come quietly into the hall.

"Why, what's this?" Lord Rokesle demanded. "Simon, you aren't making love to Lady Allonby, I hope? Fie, man! remember your cloth."

Orts replied, with that habitual smiling in which the man's eyes had no share: "Your Lordship is pleased to be pleasant. Indeed, though, I fear that your ears must burn, sir, for I was but now expatiating upon the manifold kindnesses your Lordship has been so generous as to confer upon your unworthy friend. I was admiring Lady Allonby's ruffle, sir,—Valenciennes, I take it, and very choice."

Lord Rokesle laughed, as he put aside the wet cloak, and the sword too, which, oddly enough, Rokesle was now wearing, as though he had just returned to Stornoway. "So I am to thank you for blowing my trumpet, am I?" said Lord Rokesle. "Well, you are not a bad fellow, Simon, so long as you are sober. And now be off with you to Holles,—the rascal is dying, they tell me. My luck, Simon! He made up a cravat better than anyone in the kingdom."

"The ways of Providence are inscrutable," Simon Orts considered; "and if Providence has in verity elected to chasten your Lordship, doubtless it shall be, as anciently in the case of Job the Patriarch, repaid by a recompense, by a thousandfold recompense." And, after a meaning glance toward Lady Allonby,—a glance that said, "I, too, have a tongue,"—he was mounting the stairway to the upper corridor when Lord Rokesle called to him.

"By my conscience! I forgot," said Lord Rokesle; "don't leave Stornoway without seeing me again. I shall want you by and by."

§ 2

Lord Rokesle sat down upon the long, high-backed bench, beside the fire, and facing Lady Allonby's armchair. . . .

In a somber way, he was a handsome man, and to-night, in brown

and gold, very stately. His bearing savored faintly of the hidalgo; indeed, his mother was a foreign woman, cast ashore on Usk, from a wrecked Spanish vessel, and incontinently married by the despot of the island. For her, Death had delayed his advent unmercifully; but her reason survived the marriage by two years only, and there were those familiar with the late Lord Rokesle's [1] peculiarities who considered that in this, at least, the crazed lady was fortunate. Among these gossips it was also esteemed a matter deserving comment that in the shipwrecks not infrequent about Usk the women sometimes survived, but the men never. . . .

Now Lord Rokesle regarded Lady Allonby, the while that she displayed conspicuous interest in the play of the flames. But by and by, "O vulgarity!" said Lady Allonby. "Pray endeavor to look a little more cheerful! Positively, you are glaring at me like one of those disagreeable beggars one so often sees staring at bakery windows."

He smiled. "Do you remember what the Frenchman wrote,—*et pain ne voyent qu'aux fenêtres?* There is not an enormous difference between me and the tattered rascal of Chepe, for we both stare longingly at what we most desire. And were I minded to hunt the simile to the foot of the letter, I would liken your coquetry to the intervening windowpane,—not easily broken through, but very, very transparent, Anastasia."

"You are not polite," she said, reflectively; "but, then, I suppose, living in the raw and graceless country is sure to stain a man's manners. Still, my dear Orson, you smack too much of the forest."

"Anastasia," said Lord Rokesle, bending toward her, "will you always be thus cruel? Do you not understand that in this world you are the only thing I care for? You think me a boor; perhaps I am,—and yet it rests with you, my Lady, to make me what you will. For I love you, Anastasia—"

"Why, how delightful of you! and how original too, Orson!"

"It is not a matter for jesting. I tell you that I love you."

My Lord's color was rising.

But Lady Allonby yawned. "Your honor's most devoted," she declared herself; "still, you need not boast of your affection as if

[1] Born 1685, and accidentally killed by Sir Piers Sabiston in 1738; an accurate account of this notorious duelist, profligate, charlatan and playwright is given in Ireson's *Letters*.

falling in love with me were an uncommonly difficult achievement. That, too, is scarcely polite."

"For the tenth time I ask you will you marry me?" said Lord Rokesle.

"Is't only the tenth time? Dear me, it seems like the thousandth. Of course, I couldn't think of it. Heavens, my Lord, how can you expect me to marry a man who glares at me like that? Positively you look as ferocious as the blackamoor in the tragedy,—the fellow who smothered his wife because she misplaced a handkerchief, you remember."

Lord Rokesle had risen, and he paced the hall, as if fighting down resentment. "I am no Othello," he said at last; "though, indeed, I think that the love I bear you is of a sort which rarely stirs our English blood. 'Tis not for nothing I am half Spaniard. I warn you, Anastasia, my love is a consuming blaze that will not pause for considerations of policy nor even of honor. And you madden me, Anastasia! To-day you hear my protestations with sighs and glances and faint denials; to-morrow you have only taunts for me. Sometimes, I think, 'tis hatred rather than love I bear you. Sometimes—" He clutched at his breast with a wild gesture. "I burn!" he said. "Woman, give me back a human heart in place of this flame you have kindled here, or I shall go mad! Last night I dreamed of hell, and of souls toasted on burning forks and fed with sops of balefire, —and you were there, Anastasia, where the flames leaped and curled like red-blazoned snakes about the poor damned. And I, too, was there. And through eternity I heard you cry to God in vain, O dear, wonderful, golden-haired woman! and we could see Him, somehow,—see Him, a great way off, with straight, white brows that frowned upon you pitilessly. And I was glad. For I knew then that I hated you. And even now, when I think I must go mad for desire of you, I yet hate you with a fervor that shakes and thrills in every fibre of me. Oh, I burn, I burn!" the man cried yet again, with that same frantic clutching at his breast.

Lady Allonby had risen.

"Positively, I must ask you to open a window if you intend to continue in this overheated strain. D'ye mean to suffocate me, my Lord, with your flames and your blazes and your brimstone and your other burnings? Why, Orson, you breathe conflagrations, like

a dragon in a pantomime. I had as soon converse with a piece of fireworks. So, if you'll pardon me, I will go to my brother."

At the sound of her high, crisp speech his frenzy fell from him like a mantle. "And you let me kiss you yesterday! Oh, I know you struggled, but you did not struggle very hard, did you, Anastasia?"

"Why, what a notion now! as if a person should bother seriously one way or the other about the antics of an amorous clodhopper! Meanwhile, I repeat, my Lord, I wish to go to my brother."

"Egad!" Lord Rokesle retorted, "that reminds me I have been notably remiss. I bear you a message from Harry. He had to-night a letter from Job Nangle, who, it seems, has a purchaser for Trevor's Folly at last. The fellow is with our excellent Nangle at Peniston Friars, and offers liberal terms if the sale be instant. The chance was too promising to let slip, so Harry left the island an hour ago. It happened by a rare chance that some of my fellows were on the point of setting out for the mainland,—and he knew that he could safely entrust you to Mrs. Morfit's duennaship, he said."

"He should not have done so," Lady Allonby observed, as if in a contention of mind. "He should have reflected— I will go to Mrs. Morfit, then, to confess to her in frankness that, after all these rockets and bonfires—"

"Why, that's the unfortunate part of the whole affair," said Lord Rokesle. "The same boat brought Sabina a letter which summoned her to the bedside of her husband,[1] who, it appears, lies desperately ill at Kuyper Manor. It happened, by a rare chance, that some of my fellows were on the point of setting out for the mainland,—from Heriz pier yonder, not from the end of the island whence Harry sailed,—so she and her maid embarked instanter. I saw them safely off before I came to you, with Sabina's apologies. For, of course, there was your brother here to play propriety, she said. And by the oddest misfortune in the world, I forgot to tell her that Harry Heleigh had left Usk a half-hour earlier. My memory is woefully treacherous."

But Lady Allonby had dropped affectation. "You coward! You planned this!"

[1] Archibald Morfit, M.P. for Salop, and in 1753 elected Speaker, which office he declined on account of ill-health. He was created a baronet in 1758, through the Duke of Ormskirk's influence.

"Candidly, yes. Nangle is my agent as well as Harry's, you may remember. I have any quantity of his letters, and of course an equal number of Archibald's. So I spent the morning in my own apartments, Anastasia,—tracing letters against the windowpane, which was, I suppose, a childish recreation, but then, what would you have? As you very justly observe, country life invariably coarsens a man's tastes; and accordingly, as you may now recall, I actually declined a game of *écarté* with you in order to indulge in these little forgeries. Decidedly, my dear, you must train your husband's imagination for superior flights—when you are Lady Rokesle."

She was staring at him as though he had been a portent. "I am alone," she said. "Alone—in this place—with you! Alone! you devil!"

"Your epithets increase in vigor. Just now I was only a clodhopper. Well, I can but repeat that it rests with you to make me what you will. Though, indeed, you are to all intent alone upon Usk, and upon Usk there are many devils. There are ten of them on guard yonder, by the way, in case your brother should return inopportunely, though that's scarcely probable. Obedient devils, you observe, Anastasia,—devils who exert and check their deviltry as I bid 'em, for they esteem me Lucifer's lieutenant. And I grant the present situation is an outrage to propriety, yet the evil is not incurable. Lady Allonby may not, if she value her reputation, pass to-night at Stornoway; but here am I, all willingness, and upstairs is the parson. Believe me, Anastasia, the most vinegarish prude could never object to Lady Rokesle's spending to-night at Stornoway."

"Let me think, let me think!" Lady Allonby said. Her hands plucked now at her hair, now at her dress. She appeared dazed. "I can't think!" she wailed on a sudden. "I am afraid. O Vincent, you cannot do this thing! I trusted you, Vincent. I know I let you make love to me, and I relished having you make love to me. Women are like that. But I cannot marry you, Vincent. There is a man, yonder in England, whom I love. He does not care for me any more,—he is in love with my stepdaughter. That is very amusing, is it not, Vincent? Some day I may be his mother-in-law. Why don't you laugh, Vincent? Come, let us both laugh—first at this and then at the jest you have just played on me. Do you know,

for an instant, I believed you were in earnest? But Harry went to sleep over the cards, didn't he? And Mrs. Morfit has gone to bed with one of her usual headaches? Of course; and you thought you would retaliate upon me for teasing you. You were quite right. 'Twas an excellent jest. Now let us laugh at it. Laugh, Vincent!"

But Lord Rokesle was a man of ice. "Matrimony is a serious matter, Anastasia; 'tis not becoming in those who are about to enter it to exhibit undue levity. I wonder what's keeping Simon?"

"Simon Orts!" she said, in a half whisper. Then she came toward Lord Rokesle, smiling. "Why, of course, I teased you, Vincent, but there was never any hard feeling, was there? And you really wish me to marry you? Well, we must see, Vincent. But, as you say, matrimony is a serious matter. D'ye know you say very sensible things, Vincent?—not at all like those silly fops yonder in London. I daresay you and I would be very happy together. But you wouldn't have any respect for me if I married you on a sudden like this, would you? Of course not. So you will let me consider it. Come to me a month from now, say,—is that too long to wait? Well, I think 'tis too long myself. Say a week, then. I must have my wedding finery, you comprehend. We women are such vain creatures,—not big and brave and sensible like you men. See, for example, how much bigger your hand is than mine,—mine's quite lost in it, isn't it? So—since I am only a vain, chattering, helpless female thing,—you are going to indulge me and let me go up to London for some new clothes, aren't you, Vincent? Of course you will; and we will be married in a week. But you will let me go to London first, won't you?—away from this dreadful place, away—I didn't mean that. I suppose it is a very agreeable place when you get accustomed to it. And 'tis only for clothes— Oh, I swear it is only for clothes, Vincent! And you said you would,—yes, only a moment ago you distinctly said you would let me go. 'Tis not as if I were not coming back,—who said I would not come back? Of course I will. But you must give me time, Vincent dear. O God!" she sobbed, and flung from her the loathed hand she was fondling, "it's no use!"

"No," said Lord Rokesle, rather sadly. "I am not Samson, nor are you Delilah to cajole me. It's of no use, Anastasia. I would have preferred that you came to me voluntarily, but since you cannot,

I mean to take you unwillingly. Simon," he called, loudly, "does that rascal intend to spin out his dying interminably? Charon's waiting, man."

He was answered from above. "Coming, my Lord," said Simon Orts.

§ 3

The Vicar of Heriz Magna descended the stairway with deliberation. His eyes twitched from the sobbing woman to Lord Rokesle, and then back again, in that furtive way Orts had of glancing about a room without moving his head; he seemed to lie in ambush under his gross brows; and whatever his thoughts may have been, he gave them no utterance.

"Simon," said Lord Rokesle, "Lady Allonby is about to make me the happiest of men. Have you a prayer book about you, Master Parson?—for here's a loving couple desirous of entering the blessed state of matrimony."

"The match is somewhat of the suddenest," said Simon Orts. "But I have known these impromptu marriages to turn out very happily—very happily, indeed," he repeated, rubbing his hands together, and smiling in that habitual fixed way of his. "I gather that Mr. Heleigh will not grace the ceremony with his presence?"

They understood each other, these two. Lord Rokesle grinned, and in a few words told the ecclesiastic of the trick which had ensured the absence of the other guests; and Simon Orts also grinned, but respectfully,—the grin of the true lackey wearing his master's emotions like his master's clothes, at second-hand.

"A very pretty stratagem," said Simon Orts; "unconventional, I must confess, but it is proverbially known that all's fair in love."

At this Lady Allonby came to him, catching his hand. "There is only you, Simon. Oh, there is no hope in that crazed lustful devil yonder. But you are not all base, Simon. You are a man,—ah, God! if I were a man I would rip out that devil's heart—his defiled and infamous heart! I would trample upon it, I would feed it to dogs—!" She paused. Her impotent fury was jerking at every muscle, was choking her. "But I am only a woman. Simon, you used to love me. You cannot have forgotten, Simon. Oh, haven't you any pity on a woman? Remember, Simon—remember how happy we were! Don't you remember how the nightjars used to

call to one another when we sat on moonlit evenings under the elm tree? And d'ye remember the cottage we planned, Simon?—where we were going to live on bread and cheese and kisses? And how we quarreled because I wanted to train vines over it? You said the rooms would be too dark. You said— Oh, Simon, Simon! if only I had gone to live with you in that little cottage we planned and never builded!"

The Vicar of Heriz Magna dispassionately ran over the leaves of his prayer book, till he had found the marriage service, and then closed the book, his forefinger marking the place. Lord Rokesle stood apart, and, with a sly and meditative smile, observed them.

"Your plea is a remarkable one," said Simon Orts. "As I understand it, you appeal to me to meddle in your affairs on the ground that you once made a fool of me. I think the obligation is largely optional. I remember quite clearly the incidents to which you refer; and it shames even an old sot like me to think that I was ever so utterly at the mercy of a good-for-nothing jilt. I remember every vow you ever made to me, Anastasia, and I know they were all lies. I remember every kiss, every glance, every caress,—all lies, Anastasia! And gad! the only emotion it rouses in me is wonder as to why my worthy patron here should want to marry you. Of course you are wealthy, but, personally, I would not have you for double the money. I must ask you to excuse me, Lady Rokesle—Pardon me if I somewhat anticipate your title."

She drew back from him, sighing, "Is there no manhood in the world?" she asked, with a puzzled voice. "Has neither of you ever heard of manhood, though but as distantly as men hear summer thunder? Had neither of you a woman for a mother—a woman, as I am,—or a father who was not—O God!—not as you are?"

"These rhetorical passages," said Lord Rokesle, "while very elegantly expressed, are scarcely to the point. So you and Simon went a-philandering once? Egad, that lends quite a touch of romance to the affair. But despatch, Parson Simon,—your lady's for your betters now."

"Dearly beloved,—" said Simon Orts.

"Simon, you are not all base. I am helpless, Simon, utterly helpless. There was a Simon once would not have seen me weep."

"—We are gathered together here in the sight of God—"

"You cannot do it, Simon,—do I not know you to the marrow? Remember—not me—not the vain folly of my girlhood!—but do you remember the man you have been, Simon Orts!" Fiercely Lady Allonby caught him by the shoulder. "For you do remember! You do remember, don't you, Simon?"

The Vicar was now regarding her as if in mildly puzzled meditation. He did not speak. But something clicked in his throat with sharp distinctness.

"Upon my word," said Lord Rokesle, yawning, "this getting married appears to be an uncommonly tedious business."

Then Simon Orts laid aside his prayer book and said: "I cannot do it, my Lord. The woman's right."

She clapped her hands to her breast, and stood thus, reeling upon her feet. She breathed deeply, but with a flinching inhalation, and then yet further obeyed the dictates of womanly sensibility by falling into a profound swoon. It was the Vicar who caught her as she tumbled.

"I entreat your pardon. But I do not altogether follow you, Simon," said Rokesle, without any pausing to observe Lady Allonby's unfortunate condition.

This was men's business now, and over it Rokesle's narrow forehead began to pucker.

Simon Orts bore Lady Allonby to the settle. He passed behind it to arrange a cushion under her head, with an awkward, grudging tenderness; and then rose to face Lord Rokesle across the disordered pink fripperies.

"The woman's right, my Lord. There is such a thing as manhood. Manhood!" Simon Orts repeated, with a sort of wonder; "why, I might have boasted it once. Then came this cuddling bitch to trick me into a fool's paradise,—to trick me into utter happiness, till Stephen Allonby, a marquis' son, clapped eyes on her and whistled, —and within the moment she had flung me aside. May God forgive me, I forgot I was His servant then! I set out to go to the devil, but I went farther; for I went to you, Vincent Floyer. You gave me bread when I was starving,—but 'twas at a price. Ay, the price was that I dance attendance on you, to aid and applaud your knaveries, to be your pander, your lackey, your confederate,—that I puff out, in effect, the last spark of manhood in my sot's body.

Oh, I am indeed beholden to you two! to her for making me a sot, and to you for making me a lackey. But I will save her from you, Vincent Floyer. Not for her sake"—Orts looked down upon the prostrate woman and snarled. "Christ, no! But I'll do it for the sake of the boy I have been, since I owe that boy some reparation. I have ruined his nimble body, I have dulled the wits he gloried in, I have made his name a foul thing that honesty spits out of her mouth; but, if God yet reigns in heaven, I cleanse that name to-night!"

"Oh, bless me," Lord Rokesle observed; "I begin to fear these heroics are contagious. Possibly I, too, shall begin to rant in a moment. Meanwhile, as I understand it, you decline to perform the ceremony. I have had to warn you before this, Simon, that you mustn't take too much gin when I am apt to need you. You are most pitifully drunk, man. So you defy me and my evil courses! You defy me!" Rokesle laughed, genially, for the notion amused him. "Wine is a mocker, Simon. But come, despatch, Parson Toss-pot, and let's have no more of these lofty sentiments."

"I cannot do it. O my Lord, my Lord! You wouldn't kill an unarmed man!" Simon Orts whined, with a sudden alteration of tone; for Lord Rokesle had composedly caught up his put-by sword, and he had unsheathed it, and its point was not far from the Vicar's breast.

"I trust that I shall not be compelled to. Egad, it is a very ludicrous business when the bridegroom is forced to hold a sword to the parson's bosom all during the ceremony; but a ceremony we must have, Simon, for Lady Allonby's jointure is considerable. Otherwise— Harkee, my man, don't play the fool! there are my fellows yonder, any one of whom would twist your neck at a word from me. And do you think I would boggle at that word?"

The Vicar of Heriz Magna kept silence for an instant; his eyes were twitching about the hall, in that stealthy way of his. "It is no use," he said, by and by. "A poor knave cannot afford the luxury of being honest. My life is not a valuable one, perhaps, but even vermin have an aversion to death. I resume my lackeyship, Lord Rokesle. Perhaps 'twas only the gin. Perhaps— In any event, I am once more at your service. And, as guaranty of this, I warn you that you are exhibiting in the affair scant forethought. Mr. Heleigh

is but three miles distant. Should he, by any chance, get wind of this business, Denstroude will find a boat for him readily enough,—ay, and men, too, now that the Colonel is at feud with you. Many of your people visit the mainland every night, and in their cups—as I have just shown, my Lord,—your rogues are not taciturn. An idle word spoken over an inn table may bring an armed company thundering about your gates. You should have set sentinels, my Lord."

"I have already done so," Rokesle said; "there are ten of 'em yonder. Still there is something in what you say. We will make this affair certain."

Lord Rokesle crossed the hall to the foot of the stairway and struck thrice upon the gong hanging there. Presently the door leading to the corridor was opened, and a man came into the hall.

"Punshon," said Lord Rokesle, "have any boats left the island to-night?"

"No, my Lord."

"You will see that none do. Also, no man is to leave Stornoway to-night, either for Heriz Magna or the mainland; and nobody is to enter Stornoway. Do you understand, Punshon?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"If you will pardon me," said Simon Orts, with a grin, "I have an appointment to-night. You'd not have me break faith with a lady?"

"You are a lecherous rascal, Simon. But do as you are bid and I indulge you. I am not afraid of your going to Harry Heleigh,—after performing the ceremony. Nay, my lad, for you are thereby *particeps criminis*. You will pass Mr. Orts, Punshon, to the embraces of his whore. Nobody else."

Simon Orts waved his hand toward Lady Allonby. "'Twere only kindness to warn Mr. Punshon there may be some disturbance shortly. A lamentation or so."

At this, Lord Rokesle clapped him upon the shoulder and heartily laughed. "That's the old Simon,—always on the alert. Punshon, no one is to enter this wing of the castle, on any pretext,—no one, you understand. Whatever noises you may hear, you will pay no attention. Now go."

He went toward Lady Allonby and took her hand. "Come, Anas-

tasia!" said he. "Hold, she has really swooned! why, what the devil, Simon—!"

Simon Orts had flung the gong into the fire. "She will be sounding that when she comes to," said Simon Orts. "You don't want a rumpus fit to vex the dead yonder in the Chapel."

Simon Orts stood before the fire, turning the leaves of his prayer book. He seemed to have difficulty in finding again the marriage service. You heard the outer door of the corridor closing, heard chains dragged ponderously, the heavy falling of a bolt. Orts dropped the book and, springing into the armchair, wrested Aluric Floyer's sword from its fastening.

"Tricked, tricked!" said Simon Orts. "You were always a fool, Vincent Floyer."

Lord Rokesle had already drawn his own sword. But, as yet, he only blinked, and said,—

"What, Simon, does this new nonsense mean?"

"I have the honor to repeat,—it means you are a fool! I did not know the place was guarded,—you told me. I needed privacy; by your orders no one is to enter here to-night. I needed a sword,—you had it hanging here, ready for the first comer. Oh, beyond doubt, you are a fool, Vincent Floyer!"

Standing in the armchair, Simon Orts bowed fantastically, and then leaped to the ground with the agility of an imp.

"You have tricked me neatly," Lord Rokesle conceded, and his tone did not lack honest admiration. "By gad, I have even given them orders to pass you,—after you have murdered me! Exceedingly clever, Simon,—but one thing you overlooked. You are very far from my match at fencing. So I shall presently kill you. And afterward, ceremony or no ceremony, the woman's mine."

"I am not convinced of that," the Vicar observed. "'Tis true I am no swordsman; but there are behind my sword forces superior to any which skill might muster. The sword of your fathers fights against you, my Lord,—against you that are their disgrace. They loved honor and truth; you betrayed honor, you knew not truth. They revered womanhood; you reverence nothing, and your life smirches your mother's memory. Ah, believe me, they all fight against you! Can you not see them, my Lord?—yonder at my back? —old Aluric Floyer and all those honest gentlemen, whose blood

now blushes in your body,—ay, blushes to be confined in a vessel so ignoble! Their armament fights against you, a host of gallant phantoms. And my hatred, too, fights against you,—the cur's bitter hatred for the mastering hand it dares not bite. I dare now. You made me your pander, you slew my manhood; in return, body and soul, I demolish you. Even my hatred for that woman fights against you; she robbed me of my honor,—is it not a tragical revenge to save her honor, to hold it in my hand, mine, to dispose of as I elect, —and then fling it to her as a thing contemptible? Between you, you have ruined me; but it is Simon's hour to-night. I shame you both, and past the reach of thought, for presently I shall take your life—in the high tide of your iniquity, praise God!—and presently I shall give my life for hers. Ah, I am fey, my Lord! You are a dead man, Vincent Floyer, for the powers of good and the powers of evil alike contend against you."

Simon Orts spoke rather sadly than otherwise; and there was a vague trouble in Lord Rokesle's face, though he shook his head impatiently. "These are fine words to come from the dirtiest knave unhanged in the three kingdoms!"

"Great ends may be attained by petty instruments, my Lord; a filthy turtle quenched the genius of Æschylus, and they were only common soldiers who shed the blood that redeemed the world."

Lord Rokesle pished at this. Yet he was strangely unruffled. He saluted with quietude, as equal to equal, and the two crossed blades.

Simon Orts fought clumsily, but his encroachment was unwavering. From the first he pressed his opponent with a contained resolution. The Vicar was as a man fighting in a dream,—with a drugged obstinancy, unswerving. Lord Rokesle had wounded him in the arm, but Orts did not seem aware of this. He crowded upon his master.

Now there were little beads of sweat on Lord Rokesle's brow, and his tongue protruded from his mouth, licking at it ravenously. Step by step Lord Rokesle drew back; there was no withstanding this dumb fanatic, who did not know when he was wounded, who scarcely parried attack.

"Even on earth you shall have a taste of hell," said Simon Orts. "There is terror in your eyes, my worthy patron."

Lord Rokesle flung up his arms as the sword dug into his breast.

"I am afraid! I am afraid!" he wailed. Then he coughed, and seemed with his straining hands to push a great weight from him as the blood frothed about his lips and nostrils. "O Simon, I am afraid! Help me, Simon!"

Old custom spoke there. Followed silence, and presently the empty body sprawled upon the floor. Vincent Floyer had done with it.

§ 4

Simon Orts knelt, abstractedly wiping Aluric Floyer's sword upon the corner of a rug. It may be that he derived comfort from this manual employment which necessitated attention without demanding any concentration of his mind; it may have enabled him to forget how solitary the place was, how viciously his garments rustled when he moved: the fact is certain that he cleaned the sword, over and over again, superfluously.

Then a scraping of silks made him wince. Turning, he found Lady Allonby half erect upon the settle. She stared about her with a kind of infantile wonder; her glance swept over Lord Rokesle's body, without, to all appearances, finding it an object of remarkable interest. "Is he dead?"

"Yes," said Simon Orts. "Get up!"

His voice had a rasp; she might from his tone have been a refractory dog. But Lady Allonby obeyed him.

"We are in a devil of a mess," said Simon Orts; "yet I see a way out of it,—if you can keep your head. Can you?"

"I am past fear," she said, dully. "I drown, Simon, in a sea of feathers. I can get no foothold, I clutch nothing that is steadfast, and I smother. I have been like this in dreams. I am very tired, Simon."

He took her hand, collectedly appraising her pulse. He put his own hand upon her bared bosom, and felt the beat of her heart.

"No," said Simon Orts, "you are not afraid. Now, listen! You lack time to drown in a sea of feathers. You are upon Usk, among men who differ from beasts by being a thought more devilish, and from devils by being a little more bestial; it is my opinion that the earlier you get away the better. Punshon has orders to pass Simon Orts. Very well; put on this."

He caught up his long cloak and wrapped it about her. Lady

Allonby stood rigid. But immediately he frowned and removed the garment from her shoulders.

"That won't do. Your skirts are too big. Take 'em off."

Submissively she did so, and presently stood before him in her underpetticoat.

"You cut just now a very ludicrous figure, Anastasia. I dare assert that the nobleman who formerly inhabited yonder carcass would still be its tenant if he had known how greatly the beauty he went mad for was beholden to the haberdasher and the mantua-maker, and quite possibly the chemist. *Persicos odi,* Anastasia; 'tis a humiliating reflection that the hair of a dead woman artfully disposed about a living head should have the power to set men squabbling, and murder be at times engendered in a paint pot. However, wrap yourself in the cloak. Now turn up the collar,—so. Now pull down the hat brim. Um—a—pretty well. Chance favors us unblushingly. You may thank your stars it is a rainy night and that I am a little man. You detest little men, don't you? Yes, I remember."

Simon Orts now gave his orders, emphasizing each with a not overclean forefinger. "When I open this door you will go out into the corridor. Punshon or one of the others will be on guard at the farther end. Pay no attention to him. There is only one light,—on the left. Keep to the right, in the shadow. Stagger as you go; if you can manage a hiccough, the imitation will be all the more life-like. Punshon will expect something of the sort, and he will not trouble you, for he knows that when I am fuddled I am quarrelsome. 'Tis a diverting world, Anastasia, wherein, you now perceive, habitual drunkenness and an unbridled temper may sometimes prove commendable,—as they do to-night, when they aid persecuted innocence!" Here Simon Orts gave an unpleasant laugh.

"But I do not understand—"

"You understand very little except coquetry and the proper disposition of a ruffle. Yet this is simple. My horse is tied at the postern. Mount it,—astride, mind. You know the way to the Vicarage, so does the horse; you will find that posturing half-brother of mine at the Vicarage. Tell Frank what has happened. Tell him to row you to the mainland; tell him to conduct you to Colonel Denstroude's. Then you must shift for yourself; but Denstroude is a

gentleman, and Denstroude would protect Beelzebub if he came to him a fugitive from Vincent Floyer. Now do you understand?"

"Yes," said Lady Allonby, and seated herself before the fire,—"yes, I understand. I am to slip away in the darkness and leave you here to answer for Lord Rokesle's death—to those devils. La, do you really think me as base as that?"

Now Simon Orts was kneeling at her side. The black cloak enveloped her from head to foot, and the turned-up collar screened her sunny hair; in the shadow of the broad hat brim you could see only her eyes, resplendent and defiant, and in them the reflection of the vaulting flames. "You would stay, Anastasia?"

"I will not purchase my comfort at the cost of yours. I will be indebted to you for nothing, Simon Orts."

The Vicar chuckled. "Nor appeared Less than archangel ruined," he said. "No, faith, not a whit less! We are much of a piece, Anastasia. Do you know—if affairs had fallen out differently,—I think I might have been a man and you a woman? As it is—" Kneeling still, his glance devoured her. "Yes, you would stay. And you comprehend—almost—what staying signifies. 'Tis pride, your damnable pride, that moves you,—but I rejoice, for it proves you a brave woman. Courage, at least, you possess, and this is the first virtue I have discovered in you for a long while. However, there is no necessity for your staying. The men of Usk will not hurt Simon Orts."

She was very eager to believe this. Lady Allonby had found the world a pleasant place since her widowhood. "They will not punish you? You swear it, Simon?"

"Why, the man was their tyrant. They obeyed him—yes, through fear. I am their deliverer, Anastasia. But if they found a woman here,—a woman not ill-looking—" Simon Orts snapped his fingers. "Faith, but I must blushingly leave you to conjecture the rest," said he.

They had both risen, he smiling, and the woman in a muddle of hope and doubtfulness. "Swear to it, Simon!"

"Anastasia, were affairs as you suppose them, I would have a curt while to live. Were affairs as you suppose them, I would stand now at the threshold of eternity. And I swear to you, upon my

soul's salvation, that I have nothing to fear. Nothing will ever hurt me any more."

"No, you would not dare to lie if you were really facing death," she said, after a considerable pause. "I believe you. I will go. Good-by, Simon." Lady Allonby went toward the door opening into the corridor, but turned there and came back to him. "I shall never see you again. And, la, I think that I rather hate you than otherwise, for you remind me of things I would willingly forget. But, Simon, I wish we had gone to live in that little cottage we planned, and quarreled over, and never built! I think we would have been happy."

Simon Orts raised her hand to his lips. "Yes," said he, "we would have been happy. I would have been a man doing a man's work in the world, and you a matron, grizzling, perhaps, but rich in content, and in love opulent. As it is, you have your flatterers, your gossip, and your cards; I have my gin."

"Simon, why have you done—this?"

The Vicar of Heriz Magna flung out his hands in a gesture of impotence. "I dare confess now that which even to myself I have never dared confess. I suppose the truth of it is that I still love you."

"I am sorry. I am not worth it, Simon."

"No; you are immeasurably far from being worth it. But one does not justify these fancies by mathematics. Good-by, Anastasia."

§ 5

Holding the door ajar, the Vicar of Heriz Magna heard a horse's hoofs slap their leisurely way down the hillside. Presently the sound died and he turned back into the hall.

"A brave woman, that! Oh, a trifling, shallow-hearted jilt, but a brave creature!

"I had to lie to her. She would have stayed else. And perhaps it is true that, in reality, I have loved her all my life,—or in any event, have hankered after the pink and white flesh of her as any gentleman might. Pschutt! a pox on all lechery, says the dying man,—since it is now necessary to put that strapping yellow-haired trollop out of your mind, Simon Orts,—yes, after all these years, to put her quite out of your mind. Faith, she might wheedle me

now to her heart's content, and my pulse would never budge; for I must devote what trivial time there is to hoping they will kill me quickly. He was their god, that man!"

Simon Orts went toward the dead body, looking down into the distorted face. "And I, too, loved him. Yes, such as he was, he was the only friend I had remaining. And I think he liked me," Simon Orts said aloud, with a touch of shy pride. "Yes, and you trusted me, didn't you, Vincent? Wait for me, then, my Lord,—I shall not be long. And now I'll serve you faithfully. I had to play the man's part, you know,— you mustn't grudge old Simon his one hour of manhood. You wouldn't, I think. And in any event, I shall be with you presently, and you can cuff me for it if you like,—just as you used to do."

He covered the dead face with his handkerchief, but in the instant he drew it away. "No, not this coarse cambric. You were too much of a fop, Vincent. I will use yours,—the finest linen, my Lord. You see old Simon knows your tastes."

He drew himself erect exultantly.

"They will come at dawn to kill me; but I have had my hour. God, the man I might have been! And now—well, perhaps He would not be offended if I said a bit of a prayer for Vincent."

So the Vicar of Heriz Magna knelt beside the flesh that had been Lord Rokesle, and there they found him in the morning.

FROM

Something About Eve

"QUALIS ARTIFEX!"

REGARDING THE STARS

LEUCOSIA'S SINGING

THE CHIVALRY OF MERLIN

SOMETHING ABOUT EVE *is, like all stories about women, something also, and perhaps even more, about the sons of Adam. The theme of the book is the opposition between the poet in man and the other interests, motives, impulses in his nature which complete him as a man and thwart him as a poet. Gerald Musgrave, a modern Virginian descendant of Manuel and also clearly akin to the other red-headed poet, Horvendile, is disembodied from his fleshly being and disencumbered of present circumstances; he goes backward in time toward Yesterday, which is the goal of all poets. The contest between his poetic aspirations and his postponing human limitations results in a comfortable compromise on Mispec Moor, where he is quite content to delay his quest for the ultimate realm of all poets and to remain with his excellent cook and wise woman, Maya, somewhat as Manuel, in* Figures of Earth, *was moderately happy, after all, with his not very beautiful or poetic Niafer. Though Gerald Musgrave never realizes his vision of the country whose bourn no poet, apparently, even the greatest poet, ever crosses, except to perpetual exile, yet Gerald does have, by virtue of the reversal or suspension of time, immediate vision of poets and sages of all times, as they pass by his cottage on the road through Mispec Moor bound for Antan. Four of these passers-by are the subjects of the chapters given here, two from Part VII, "The Book of Poets," and two from Part VIII, "The Book of Mages." The third wise man with Odysseus and Merlin is Solomon, here crowded out from between his companions by the cramping exigencies of space.*

J. M.

"QUALIS ARTIFEX!"

And Gerald used to amuse himself by talking with the travelers who passed by the neat log and plaster cottage of Maya the wise woman, upon their way to the court of Queen Freydis and her consort the Master Philologist. For it was a good and shrewd policy, Gerald felt, for a monarch to familiarize himself with his future subjects: so he would sit by the wayside, in the shade of a conveniently placed chestnut-tree,—incognito, as it were,—and would artfully allure them into conversation.

"Hail, friends! And what business draws you to the city of all marvels?" said Gerald, on the first morning that he fell into this long-sighted course.

He was told—by the big-bellied, yellow-haired man, whose skin was so curiously spotted,—that they were two poets upon their way to Antan, the goal of all the gods, and the friendly haven of true poets, where poets might hope to find at last that loveliness which they desired and could nowhere discover in their everyday life upon earth. To Gerald this was excellent news, since it increased the number of his future subjects very gratifyingly.

But he said nothing, while the big-bellied, spotted, thin-legged gentleman, in the purple robe adorned with golden stars, went on in his answer to Gerald's first question, by explaining that the speaker was Nero Claudius Cæsar, the king of all poets, and that his scrawny companion, in a brown doublet of which both elbows needed patching, was an artist of considerable talent from out of the Gallic provinces, who was called François Villon.

Gerald found this also of some interest, in view of what he remembered about the Mirror of Caer Omn. Not often did you thus come face to face with two discarded personalities. But Gerald said nothing about this either. Instead, he questioned Nero yet further, and he thus learned that these two poets were on their way to the

court of Freydis, because there alone in the universe was art properly regarded: for there, indeed, true artists were manufactured out of common clay, and were informed with the fire of Audela.

It was one or another old hero from out of Poictesme, Nero had heard, who had first modeled these earthen images; and Freydis, as occasion served, gave life to these images and set them to live upon earth, as changelings. But, above all, said Nero, in Antan the true poets of this world fared happily among the myths and the gods who once had afforded to these poets such fine themes, so that to-day of course these poets wrote even more splendid poems now that they composed with the eye upon the object.

Yet, Nero thought, playing idly with the emerald monocle which hung upon a green cord about his scrawny neck, this Queen would not be very likely ever to create in clay, or to find coming to her court, such another artist as Nero himself had been in the days of his Roman pre-eminence. No other person known to him had ever excelled in all the polite arts. For in dancing and in oratory, in wrestling (even with such dreadful adversaries as lions) and in music both vocal and instrumental,—alike as a charioteer and as a tragic actor,—but, above all, as a poet, and equally as a dramatic, a lyric and an epic poet,—Nero had been unanimously awarded the first prizes in every contest. He did not care to appear boastful: yet, by all canons of criticism, one had to consider the list of his overwhelming triumphs, in Rome, in Naples, in Antium, in Alba,—at the Parthian games, at the Isthmian games, at the Olympian games,—and, in fine, in each contest which Nero had ever entered anywhere in all the kingdoms of which he was Emperor. No other artist had a record to compare with that: no other of the world's great geniuses had ever been confessedly supreme in every polite form of æsthetic endeavor.

Of course, as a student of history, Nero conceded that the elect artist was not to be placed, not permanently, by his ranking in the eyes of his contemporaries, who might often be swayed by such matters, really extraneous to enduring art, as the artist's ingratiating manners and his personal beauty. As a man of the world, he even conceded the judges of the sacred games in awarding all the first prizes to Nero might furthermore have been influenced by the large sums of money which the Emperor always conferred upon

his acclaiming judges after such occasions, as well as by the dexterity of the tortures which would have followed any decision less just.

But the indisputable fact, the fact of superb importance, was that Nero had made of his life a poem which was wholly a unique masterpiece in the way of self-expression. He, above all other men, had served the one end of every poet's art, by revealing the true nature of man's being; for Nero had embodied, with loving carefulness, each trait which he found in himself, through some really memorable action,—rearing, as it were, among marshes and quicksands, and in yet other places which other persons feared to visit, those strange and passionately colored orchid growths which alone could express the highly complex nature of every man's desires—

"That jargon becomes somewhat senescent," said Gerald. "Still, as a museum piece,—yes, even now, sophistication does display something of the quaint beauty of thorough obsoleteness. It has acquired the charm, and, as it were, the patina, of sedan chairs and of full-bottomed wigs and of girdles of chastity and of suits of armor, and of all other things, once useful enough, which are nowadays endeared to every poet's heart by the fact that they are forever outmoded. So let us grant it, O Cæsar, in the days that are gone you were a devil of a fellow and a sad rip among the ladies—"

"Why, but, for that matter—" Nero began.

"I know. You broad-mindedly despised neither sex. You were in amour a Greek scholar. You were something of a surgeon also. I concede it, I blush, and I urge you to omit all embarrassingly personal details."

So Nero went on, saying that other emperors, with very much his chances, had lacked the genius necessary to develop these chances. There had, of course, been minor artists. Caligula, for example, among so much hackwork in the way of throat-cutting, had shown at least one jet of rather lovely inspiration when he attempted a criminal assault upon the moon; that was a really finely imagined bit of work. Then, also, Domitian and Commodus and Tiberius had displayed praiseworthy ambitions; quite neat little things had been done by Tiberius, in an amateur way, at Capri; Caracalla too had been so-so: but they had all tended to wallow unimaginatively in cut and dried executions; merely to chop off anybody's

head was not art, no matter how often you did it. Besides, work done upon a public scaffold inevitably coarsened one's touch. And Heliogabalus, whatsoever the lad's thin vein of undeniable talent in the way of lyric lechery, had lacked the stamina and gusto for any sustained masterpiece in Nero's copious epic style.

For Nero alone had been, in every branch of self-expression, the sincere, skilled artist, enriching his handiwork always with that continual slight novelty which art demands. He had builded his appropriate stage, in the Golden House—

"A house entirely overlaid with gold," said Gerald, reminiscently, "and adorned everywhere with jewels and mother of pearl, a house so rich and ample that it had three-storied porticos a mile long, and huge revolving banqueting halls, and ivory ceilings which perpetually scattered perfumes and red rose-petals—"

Nero, at that, had out his emerald monocle; and through it he now regarded Gerald with the childlike amiability of a sincere artist whensoever his vanity is flattered.

Yes, Nero admitted, he had endeavored to express himself in that house also. The Golden House had been (to play with metaphor) the handsome binding of that poem which was his life, when, in a setting such as the world had never known before or since, he had given to his every human trait its full color value. In the Golden House he had reared his orchids, he had labored to open many frank and incisive and utterly unstinted avenues of self-expression to that somewhat complex thing called human nature. . . .

But here he entered rather explicitly into details. Gerald felt the style of this emperor to be growing woefully un-American; and Gerald fidgeted.

"Let us, I again urge you," said Gerald, "speak of less personal matters, and diversify the vividness of these orchids with a few fig-leaves!"

Perhaps, of course, the Emperor continued, he, like every other really great artist, had been somewhat the anthologist, in that he had invented outright none of the art forms among the many in which he had distinguished himself. He had taken over from his predecessors a number of inspirations and a formula or two, as he would be the very last to deny: but the fine craftsmanship was all

his, as well as that distinguishing, that peculiarly Neronic, touch of romantic irony, by virtue of which this artist had slain with suavity, had destroyed with a caress, and had ennobled all that was most dear to his human nature by killing it. He spoke now of the deaths of his wives, of Octavia and Poppæa, and of others who had been his wives just for the evening; he spoke of Sporus, of Aiëtes, of Narcissus, and of that other exceedingly beautiful boy, Aulus Plautinus. . . .

And again Gerald raised a protesting hand. "Let us still," said Gerald, "avoid these quite un-American personalities! Meanwhile, you do not speak of your mother Agrippina."

He surprised in the spotted face of Nero something very like terror. But Nero said only, "No."

And besides, the Emperor continued, with rising animation, that happy chronological accident, the fact that in the days of Nero Christianity began its advance toward world supremacy, had enabled him, by pure luck, to lend to the great poem of his life just the needful felicitous touch of working in a new medium. To burn well-thought-of taxpayers and putative virgins as the torches at your supper parties was a device which, out of a natural desire to surprise and to amuse one's guests, might have occurred to almost any host in quest of that continual slight novelty which the art of hospitality also demands. But that these flambeaux should later become the brightest glories of a triumphant church had made these supper parties, which were really quite modest affairs, unforgettable. Nero had expressed himself—not merely, as he thought at the time, through persons supposed to be deficient in patriotism and more or less suspected of being (here again, to play with metaphor) not one hundred per cent Roman,—but, as it had turned out, through saints and apostles, and through consecrated religious martyrs, such as not every artist could get for his themes and raw material. So, the succeeding discouragements of Christians had, æsthetically, fallen flat, in their impression upon posterity: their authors had come into this field too late, to find that tragic vein worked out, and all its most striking possibilities exhausted, by the great artist that was Nero. It was hardly remembered that Marcus Aurelius and Diocletian and many others had broken and flayed and mutilated and

burned to the very best of their ability: these plodders were but the epigoni and the unimaginative plagiarists of Nero.

So had it come about that of all the emperors Rome had known, and of all the tyrants and despots in every land and era, who had followed the fine art of self-expression, and who had shown what human nature really is—in, as it were, the nude, when any man is released from time-serving and is made omnipotent,—of all these, there had remained just one whose name was remembered everywhere; just one whose fame was imperishable; just one who had become a never-dying myth: and that one was Nero. The legend of Nero was, in a world wherein every other man stayed more or less unwillingly an unfulfilled Nero, the supreme type of the literature of escape. The legend of Nero was a poem which men would not ever forget: it was a poem familiar in all languages: and it was a poem which, now, everybody could cordially admire and delight in, because time had removed the need of considering any current moral standards or one's own physical safety in judging this poem, now that Nero was only a character in a book, like—as the Emperor said, with a quaint revealment of his retained interest in literature,—like Iago or Volpone or Tartuffe. For whether you called any particular book a history or a poem or a drama did not, of course, affect the impressiveness and vigor and complexity of the character drawing in it, nor the value of the author's apt and edifying revelations as to any eternal verities of man's being.

"For, certainly," said Nero, "my life presented, as no other artist has ever done, the gist of all human nature as that nature actually is, when freed of such inhibitions as constrain it in but too many baffled lives. My life was, thus, a connoisseur's production, and a work of art which escaped even the grave risk of anti-climax. For there was not anything lacking in the ending of it, either. My fall and the circumstances of my death were so æsthetically right that, as an artist, I never in my life enjoyed anything quite so much. Nothing could conceivably have been in better taste. For, overnight, as you may remember, I passed from the throne of the world, to hide in a tumbled-down out-house, under a ragged, very faded blue coverlet, and to perish thus by my own hand,—with an appropriate tragic verse upon my lips,—and without any friend remaining anywhere. No tragedy could have been more boldly pro-

portioned, with all the Aristotelian unities so exactly preserved. And it was most gratifyingly led up to, too. For just as I was about to approach the dénouement of my poem, the statues of my Lares toppled down miraculously, the hind quarters of my favorite riding-horse were transformed into the hind quarters of an ape, and the doors of the mausoleum of Augustus having unclosed of their own accord, there issued from the tomb a divine voice which summoned me to destruction. These incidents, I repeat, were gratifying, for they showed that the exercise of my art had been viewed by Heaven appreciatively. Ah, yes, in all I was peculiarly favored."

REGARDING THE STARS

VILLON spat meditatively between his yellow front teeth. He fingered, in the while that he continued his reflections, his scarred and puckered lower lip. Then he confessed that he dissented from a great many of his predecessor's remarks.

"You were impressive. Your life was a competent job, boldly executed, and nobody denies its merits on their own melodramatic plane. Yet it lacked the indispensable touch of tenderness, without which no work of art is of the first class. No: it was I who was truly favored; and I made of my life a flawless poem without dragging in such gaudy accessories as thrones and burning cities and the wasting of a lovely, mother-naked virgin on a mere lion."

And this François Villon went on to speak of the great blessings which had been accorded him. He had been granted irresolution, and lewdness, and poverty, and cowardice, and a large weakness for drink, and an ingrained dishonesty, and a disease-wrecked body, and everything else which was needed to make him a knave as contemptible as any man could hope to be.

"I was, in brief, gentlemen, as I have elsewhere remarked, a hog with a voice. And there was no voice like my voice."

For out of the mire that wallowing, lustful and cowardly beast had sung. Now he sang jeeringly, and made fun of the whole world with satire and mockery and invective, and with plain filth-flinging,—which was all quite good art, because it pleases people to see a man superior to his fate. Now he sang piercingly of the great platitude that death conquers and ruins everything: and to that sentiment nobody can ever turn a deaf ear, because it is the only sentiment with a universal personal application. But, above all, he sang of his regret for his past indiscretions, and of his yearnings for spiritual cleanliness, and—"soaring," as Villon now quoted, with admirable complacency, "to the very gates of Heaven upon

the star-sown wings of faith and song,"—he had proclaimed his trust in that divine love which, ultimately, would redeem all properly repentant persons from the logical outcome of their doings in this world, and would give to the marred life of every properly repentant person a happy ending in a fair-colored paradise agreeably full of harps and lutes. And people liked that, too, of course, because such a philosophy made everybody feel muggily consoled and, for no especial reason, magnanimous.

So had Villon become a very great poet whose art was a fine blending of mirth and of pathos and of faith, and so might he hope to win to high honors in Antan, where, if anywhere, poets were properly rewarded. And the squalor and degradation of his terrestrial living were, now, but so many picturesque ingredients in the superb poem of his life, now that Villon too was—just as his Roman confrère had pointed out,—to be regarded as a character in a book. The difference was that Villon had become a never-dying myth of vagabondage with its heart in the right place, and a parable which revealed how much of good always survived in the most vile and abandoned of criminals and even in persons unsuccessful in business life. The legend of Villon thus proved exactly the contrary to that which was proved by the legend of Nero: as the one demonstrated the real nature of man to aspire only to lust and cruelty the moment that inhibitions were removed, so did the other legend show the real fundamental nature of every man to be incurably good and lovable under all possible surface stains. And the legend of Villon, Villon repeated, had in it tenderness,—that indispensable flavor of tenderness and of a sentimentality as wholesomely nourishing as molasses, without which no work of art can ever really be of the first class so far as goes its popular appeal.

"For my life, gentlemen, was truly a superb parable. And it has been properly appreciated, it has even been paid the fine compliment of being plagiarized by Holy Writ. Why, what the devil! if the parable of the Prodigal Son be good art in the New Testament, is it the less good art for being acted out with the vigor and the brio I brought to that task? For I too wasted all my substance, with some feminine assistance, and went down among the swine and the husks, without ever forgetting that by and by I was to be comforted with never-failing love and veal cutlets. In brief, although

I lived perforce in the gutter, yet my eyes were upon the stars."

Then Gerald remarked, to this one of his discarded personalities: "You move me, Messire François. You sound upon my heart-strings a resounding chord, through your employment of a figure of speech which is always effective. I do not know why, but any imaginable observations conveying a statement manifestly untrue can be made edifying and sublime through ending with the word 'stars.' We poets have convinced everybody, including ourselves, that there is some occult virtue in the act of looking at the stars. So, when you said just now, 'Although I lived perforce in the gutter, yet my eyes were upon the stars,' I was moved very mightily. I seemed to hear the yearning cry of all human aspirations, foiled but superb. Yet, if you had asserted your eyes to have been habitually, or at least every clear night, upon the planets—or, for that matter, upon the comets or the asteroids,—I would not have been moved in the least."

"It is sufficient that you were moved without knowing why," observed Nero. "That is the magic of poetry. Very often when I recited some of my best poems, to commemorate the sorrows of Orestes or Canace or Œdipus, I myself could not quite understand the springs of that terrible misery which convulsed my hearers. They wept; they fainted; a number of the women entered prematurely into the labors of childbirth; and I was compelled to have the doors and windows guarded by my Praetorian soldiers because so many of the audience invariably attempted to escape from the well-nigh intolerable ecstasies which my art provoked. Such is the magic of great poetry, a thing not ever wholly to be explained even by the poet."

Then Gerald said: "Yet, you two poets who have traveled through the Marches of Antan, wherein only two truths endure, and the one teaching is that we copulate and die,—do you not look to find when you have reached Antan, which is the goal of all the gods, some third truth?"

It seemed to him that the faces of the two myths had now become evasive and more wary.

Nero replied, "For a poet, there exist always just as many truths as he cares to imagine."

And Villon remarked: "I would phrase it somewhat differently.

I would say there exist more truths than any poet cares to imagine. But it comes to the same thing."

"Yes," Gerald assented,—"for it comes to an evasion. Yet I, who also am a poet, I retain my faith in the rather beautiful idea of that third truth."

And then Gerald told them that he himself had long dabbled in the art of poetry. "Indeed," he added, generously, "I will now recite to you one of my sonnets which appears appropriate to the occasion."

"Dog," Villon replied, taking up his hat, "does not eat dog."

And Nero very hastily stated that, howsoever unbounded their regret, they really must be hurrying on to the city of marvels.

So these myths departed, traveling together, with an intimacy somewhat remarkable in the light of their flatly diverse teachings. And Gerald warned them to make the most of the present state of affairs in Antan, because the day after to-morrow the Lord of the Third Truth, a deity with several not uninteresting aspects, would be descending upon Antan, to take over all the powers of the Master Philologist, and to deal with Queen Freydis afterward as his divine inclinations might prompt.

Thereafter Gerald went back to Maya and to his dinner quite jauntily, now that he knew in his appointed kingdom the true poets of this world were assembling to purvey his amusement: and he felt himself to be afire with impatience to reach that city of all marvels, yonder behind him, as he walked away from Antan, leisurely ascending to the trim cottage of Maya the wise woman, who went as a crowned queen, and would have none of his love-making, and yet was such an excellent cook, in her plain way.

LEUCOSIA'S SINGING

And upon another day, as Gerald sat by the roadside beneath his chestnut-tree, and waited for supper to be ready, three persons passed toward Antan, traveling together. They were all notable looking men; and Gerald greeted them with the sign which is known only to supreme mages. They returned his greeting, but they shaped signs that were of an older magic than any which was familiar to Gerald.

And then the first of these men said, "I was Odysseus, Laertes' son."

Gerald thus knew that before him stood yet another of his discarded personalities. But Gerald made no comment.

And Odysseus continued: "I had wisdom. My prudent wisdom was to men of every calling an object of considerable attention, and the fame of it reached Heaven. I ruled in Ithaca, an island kingdom, well situated toward the west. I went unwillingly with the other well-greaved Greeks to besiege Ilion: the enterprise to me seemed rash, and unlikely to be remunerative: yet, being engaged, I dealt prudently, and in the end, where so many merely brave persons had failed, it was through my prudence that the enterprise succeeded. For ten years Ilion defied the strength of Achilles and of Ajax; Ilion derided all the endeavors of auburn-haired Menelaus and of godlike Agamemnon: but the cunning of Odysseus felled Ilion in one night. I took my share of the spoils; I left the glory to them that wanted it. I returned across the world to that which I more prudently desired, toward the quiet comforts of home in craggy Ithaca. The prayer of the blinded Cyclops, the wrath of earth-shaking Poseidon, the white thunder of offended Zeus, and the twelve winds of Æolus, all fought against me. I prevailed. The seawitch Scylla, an exorbitant lady with twelve arms, a ravening monster whom none might pass and live, I passed. Charybdis,

which devoured all, did not devour me, for I clung prudently to a fig-tree."

"Indeed," said Gerald, "the leaves of that tree are very often a great protection,—O much-enduring and crafty Odysseus," Gerald added hastily, as became a Greek scholar.

"Moreover, the sun's daughter, fair-haired Circe, and bright Queen Calypso, the divine one of goddesses, these also detained me rather more amiably. I embraced them; they did not find me slothful in their beds. For they were goddesses, as quick in anger as they were in lust. It is not prudent to deny a goddess. From the fond arms of these immortals I passed on toward my desired goal. Yet nobody is always prudent. When my ship approached the island of the man-devouring Sirens I caused the ears of my sailors to be stopped with wax; but I caused myself to be bound to the mast, so that I might hear the song which Leucosia sang in the while that Parthenopê and Ligeia made a sweet music. I desired to hear without any hurt that song which was so lovely that it drew less prudent men to the arms of its singer, wherein, as they well knew, dark death awaited them. I heard that song. It did not matter to me that I saw how the low beach about those music-makers gleamed, like silver, where a thin sunlight fell upon the scattered bones of many men whom they had slain. I struggled to cast myself into the gray sea-water, so that I might go to Leucosia. But my bonds held me. I was bound, both my hands and feet were bound, with very strong cables. The black ship passed onward, whitening the water with its polished blades of fir-wood; and I wept as I too passed onward, away from my own ruin, and drawing nearer to the goal which my prudent wisdom had desired."

"Truly, the enchantment of her singing must have maddened you. Yet such is the magic of great poetry," Gerald remarked, "a thing not ever wholly to be explained even by the poet. . . . Yet your goal, nevertheless, was reached, they tell me, O much-contriving Odysseus. Your goal was reached, as I remember it, in the many-pillared hall of your home in Ithaca, and in a fine slaughter of those suitors who were pestering your wife because they believed that she was your widow."

"Very naturally my goal was reached. I was Odysseus. Very naturally I made an end of those wasters of my substance who had

been eating and drinking for nine years at my expense. There arose, as one by one their heads were smitten off, a hideous moaning. The floors ran with blood. It was wholly plain that Odysseus faced those imprudent persons who had made over-free with his flocks and his wine jars and his wife and the other goods of his household. Yet I knew, by and by, that what I now desired was not to be found in craggy Ithaca nor in the calm embraces of Penelope nor in the tranquillity of my well-ordered home. I gave laws. I heard cases. I decided squabbles between one shepherd and another shepherd. I who had contrived the burning of Ilion now oversaw the branding of my cattle. War did not trouble Ithaca, of whose king all other kings were afraid. For I was very famous. I lacked for nothing in wealth. I lived at ease. But no man hears the singing of Leucosia except at a great price. I heard Leucosia no more. I heard, instead, the voices of fools praising my strength and my prudent wisdom, and the voice of my wife talking sensibly about I never noticed exactly what. I lacked for nothing which prudent men desire, in my snug, sleek, well-ordered Ithaca. But I had seen too much in my voyaging about a world which was more lewd and riotous than I permitted anybody to be in my Ithaca. I remembered too many things. No, I did not regret Calypso nor Circe nor that fine girl Nausicaä. I could at will have returned to them. But I remembered the singing of Leucosia, to whom I dared not return. For no man hears the singing of Leucosia except at a great price."

"But of what did she sing, O much-planning Odysseus?"

"She sang of that which haunted me, and which derided the rewards of my prudent wisdom. She sang of the one way to that which I truly desired."

"That, O noble son of Laertes, is not a remarkably explicit reply."

Now the wise Greek regarded Gerald somberly. Odysseus said, by and by:

"She sang of that which troubles a prudent person's soul and despoils his rational living of all fat contentment. Let it suffice that she sang, I think, of Antan. That is why I must travel to Antan, wherein—it may be,—is my desire."

—It was only then that Gerald recollected something. He recollected that Evadne of the Dusk, that feathery-legged Evadne, who, Horvendile had said, was called Leucosia in the days of her seafaring. But Gerald said nothing about what, after all, was none of his affair. . . .

THE CHIVALRY OF MERLIN

THEN said the third of these wise men: "I was Merlin Ambrosius. The wisdom that I had was more than human, for it came to me from my father. But I served Heaven with it. The land was starved and sick and frightened. Many little chieftains fought in its wild naked fields, and murderously waylaid one another in its old forests, causelessly. I made the land an ordered realm. I gave the land one king, a king whose sword was as bright as thirty torches. That sword flashed everywhither about the land to enforce justice and every other virtue commendable to Heaven. So powerful was Caliburn, that sword which Jurgen had flung away. It served Heaven, now that Arthur Pendragon and those who served him all served my whims. They were my toys. . . . I in my playing gave to the gaping, smooth-chinned boy, and to his shaggy followers, a notion to play with in their turn. This notion was that each one of them, and that every other man, was the child of God and his Father's vicar upon earth; and that each human life was all a journeying home, toward a not ever ending happiness, and that it was a journeying which should be performed in a style appropriate to Heaven's heir apparent. Those savages believed me. They were joyous both night and day. They learned to be envious of no one, to love God, and to support no unjust cause. They learned to speak seasonably and graciously, to be generous in giving, to clothe themselves neatly, and to sing and dance, and to war fearlessly against evil. It all quite upset my father. . . . Yet my notion was, I still believe, a very beautiful notion. It created beauty everywhere, because, as I have said, the heir apparent of Heaven must journey homeward in an appropriate style. Yes, the results were eminently picturesque. Caerleon arose; there was no city more delectable upon earth than was the pleasant town of Caerleon, builded upon Usk between the forest and the clear river. Arthur sat there upon the

dais over which was spread a covering of flame-colored satin. Under his elbow was a cushion of red satin. The lords and princes and the knights sat about King Arthur Pendragon, each in his order and degree. The oppressed and the unhappy came to Arthur. He was to the young a father, to the old a comforter. Wrong was loathsome to him, the right was very dear to Arthur, and he knew not what it was to fear. My father did not think at all well of him. . . . But I was pleased with my toys, for now I found in every part of the land a romantic strange beauty. The knights rode at adventure upon enormous stallions. They clanked as they rode. They went masked in blue armor and in crimson armor and in silver-speckled green armor. Upon their heads were brightly colored lions and leopards and griffins and sea horses, and very often their helmets were wrapped about with a woman's sleeve. The giants that these knights fought against were mighty giants who ate at one meal six swine: the dragons that they fought against were marvelous huge worms with shining scales and wattles and magnificent whiskers. The maidens whom they rescued were each more lovely than the day. These maidens had blond curling hair and frontlets of red gold upon their heads. About each tender and rose-tinted body was a gown of yellow satin. Upon the feet of these maidens were shoes of variegated leather fastened with gilt clasps. . . . In fine, the heirs of Heaven discharged their moral and constabulary duties quite picturesquely as they rode homeward. It was in this way I who was Merlin Ambrosius played with heroic virtues: it is thus that I who was the son of my father made, for my amusement, men that were more virtuous and colorful than Heaven had ever been able to make them. Still, still, it really was a rather plainly outrageous notion upon which all this was founded: and by and by the dear and droll and heart-breakingly beautiful antics of my flesh and blood toys did not content my desire."

Gerald remarked, now that the old gentleman had paused in his meditative speaking, "Your desire, Messire Merlin, as I remember it, was for an enchantress who outwitted and betrayed you."

"Men," Merlin answered, with a grave smile, "have made a mistake in that report. Is it likely that I could be outwitted? No: I was Merlin Ambrosius."

And then Merlin told Gerald about the child Nimuë, who was

the daughter of the goddess Diana, and of how old, wearied, overlearned Merlin had come to her in the likeness of a young squire. He told of how they played for a long while with ancient magics, there in the spring woods, beside a very clear fountain in which the gravel shone like powdered silver. To make this twelve-year-old child laugh, as she did so adorably, the mage had turned into prettiness and drollery every infernal device. He created for the child Nimuë, there in the April woods, an orchard full of all those fruits and flowers, howsoever unseasonably mingled, which have the liveliest sweetness and flavor. Phantoms danced for her wide-eyed amusement, in the shaping of armed knights and archbishops and crowned ladies and goat-legged fauns: and it was all quite excellent fun. . . . Then Merlin told to Nimuë, because she pouted so adorably, the secret of building a tower which is not made of stone or timber or iron, and is so strong that it may never be felled while this world endures. And Nimuë, the moment that he had fallen asleep with his head in her lap, spoke very softly the old runes. In the while that she continued to caress her lover, she imprisoned Merlin in an enchanted tower which she had builded out of the magic air of April above a flowering white hawthorn-bush, so that Nimuë might keep her wonderful, so wise, dear lover utterly to herself.

"And I was happy there for a long while," said Merlin. "My toys, now that I played no more with them, began to break one another. Dissension and lust and hatred woke among them. They forgot the very pretty notion which I had given them in their turn to play with. The land was no longer an ordered realm. My toys now fought in the land's naked fields, and they murderously waylaid one another in its old forests. Arthur was dead, at the hands of his own bastard son begotten in incest. It was an awkward ending for the heir apparent of Heaven. The Round Table was dissolved. The land was starved and sick and frightened."

Now Merlin, the old poet who did not any longer delight to shape and to play with puppets, had paused: and he sat gazing thoughtfully, with wholly patient, tired eyes, at nothing in particular. Then Merlin said:

"I heard of all these things. They did not matter. I was happy. Yes, I suppose that I was happy. My ways were utterly domestic.

They stayed thus for a long while. . . . There was no variety. In that small heaven which a child had builded out of the magic air of April there was no variety whatever. There was no enemy, no adversary for me to get the better of through some cunning device. There was only happiness. . . . Nimuë stayed always young and kind and beautiful and contented just because I was there. The child loved me. But there was no variety. No son of my father stays forever a domestic animal. So in the end I who was Merlin Ambrosius found my desire was not in that tower of April air. There was only heaven. There was only just such a never-changing happiness as I had once talked about to the gaping, smooth-chinned boy and to his shaggy followers."

"Yet how could you escape from the blessings of a happy home life, Messire Merlin, if that tower was truly enchanted?"

"It does not seem reasonable that I should tell you all my secrets," Merlin replied, drily, "any more than it seemed reasonable that the son of my father should share every secret with Nimuë. The child loved me utterly. And I loved her. Yes, I loved Nimuë as I have loved no other creature fluttering about earth. She did not seem to walk. . . . Even so, I was Merlin Ambrosius. So in the end I left my child mistress. I quitted the small heaven which a child's pure-mindedness had contrived. And I go now into Antan to get, it may be, my desire."

Then there was silence, now that the three mages had all spoken.

And Gerald shook his head. "You gentlemen have talked with gratifying candor. You have expressed yourself, with chaste simplicity, in very plain short sentences. You have reasoned powerfully. You imply that neither a wife nor a mistress, or even a harem, is able to dissuade a wise man from this journeying toward the goal of all the gods. I infer that, to the contrary, the domestic circumstances of no one of you were wholly satisfactory in the old time. Well, that is a situation still to be encountered more frequently than is desirable, even in Lichfield, and it is the reason that I too am on my way to Antan. I am stopping here just for the week-end. Yet I still do not know what in the world you gentlemen really desire."

"For one, I desire nothing that is in this world," replied Odysseus.

"Yet, do you but answer me this very simple question! What do

you three expect to find in Antan? Because I can assure you that, after the impending changes to be made in the government and other civic affairs of Antan by the Lord of the Third Truth,—a deity, gentlemen, with several not uninteresting aspects, a deity with whom I may without boasting say that I have considerable influence,—why, then, the moment everything is in tolerable working order, it will be a real pleasure to afford you three gentlemen all possible courtesies."

But the three mages did not seem impressed.

"I was wise," said Solomon. "I knew all things save one thing. I did not know that word which was in the beginning, and which will be when all else has perished. And that word no god knows until he has heard it spoken by the Master Philologist."

"My desire," said Merlin, "was for the maid Nimuë and for the love of my child mistress. When I had my desire it did not content me. So I now go into Antan to find, it may be, something which I can desire. But my father's son does not go asking favors of any god."

Then Gerald said: "Yet, you three mages who have traveled through the Marches of Antan wherein only two truths endure, and the one teaching is that we copulate and die,—do you not look to find in the goal of all the gods some third truth?"

It seemed to him that the faces of these myths had now become somewhat evasive and more wary.

But they said only, speaking severally: "A wise man knows that no truth is affected either by his beliefs or by his hopes."—"A wise man accepts each truth as it is revealed to him."—"A wise man will risk nothing upon the existence of any truth."

"Still, gentlemen, these are enigmas! These sayings are not a plain answer to a plain question: and I do not quite understand these sayings."

They answered him, "There is no need that you should understand."

Then these three passed down toward the sunset statelily. And Gerald, gazing after them, once more shook his red head. These wise myths seemed to him in a bad way: it would not be easy to content the more eminent sages among his future subjects, because

these three at least, for all their wisdom, appeared never to have found out what they wanted.

Gerald shrugged. He, in any event, perfectly well knew what in this bracing country air he wanted at once. So Gerald went in at once to supper with his Maya who was such an excellent cook in her plain way.

FROM

The Certain Hour

BALTHAZAR'S DAUGHTER

TEN *poets are the subjects of the stories collected in* The Certain Hour. *Each poet is for a few brief moments shown as he lived among men, temporarily absent from his real home in Antan, that memory-womb from which every poet is born and to which he returns, perhaps for rebirth. It is the realm to which, in the preceding book,* Something About Eve, *Gerald Musgrave did not attain; for he was an unsuccessful poet, though somewhat successful as a man. The poets in* The Certain Hour *are genuine poets, but they fail in one way or another in the practical world. The value of their lives is, according to the Cabell-Charteris economics which we have met in the passages chosen from* Beyond Life, *upside-down by the ordinary earthly standard of* homo erectus, *man standing squarely on his feet. Alessandro de Medici, who appears in "Balthazar's Daughter," was not a first-rate poet, but he had a flicker of the artist in him, which was corrupted and quenched less by any failings commonly attributed to poets than by his very worldly debaucheries. The interest centers not in Alessandro but in the girl and her lover Eglamore, whom love rescues from his corruptions. "Balthazar's Daughter" was dramatized in* The Jewel Merchants, *Cabell's one published composition in play form.*

J. M.

BALTHAZAR'S DAUGHTER

Graciosa was Balthazar's youngest child, a white, slim girl with violet eyes and strange pale hair which had the color and glitter of stardust. "Some day at the Duke's court," her father often thought complacently, "she, too, will make a good match." He was a necessitous lord, a smiling, supple Tuscan who had already marketed two daughters in the Medicis' city of Florence to his advantage.

But Graciosa's time was not yet mature in the year of grace 1533, for the girl was not quite sixteen. So Graciosa remained in Balthazar's big cheerless house and was tutored in all needful accomplishments. She was proficient in the making of preserves and unguents, could play the harpsichord and the virginals acceptably, could embroider an altarcloth to admiration, and, in spite of a trivial lameness in walking, could dance a coranto or a saraband against any woman between two seas.

Now to the north of Balthazar's home stood a tall forest, overhanging both the highway and the river whose windings the highway followed. Graciosa was very often to be encountered upon the outskirts of these woods. She loved the forest, whose tranquillity bred dreams, but was already a woman in so far that she found it more variously interesting to watch the highway.

Sometimes it would be deserted save for small purple butterflies which fluttered about as if in continuous indecision, and rarely ascended more than a foot above the ground. But people passed at intervals,—as now a page, who was a notably fine fellow, clothed in ash-colored gray, with slashed, puffed sleeves, and having a heron's feather in his cap; or a Franciscan with his gown tucked up so that you saw how the veins on his naked feet stood out like the carvings on a vase; or a farmer leading a calf; or a gentleman in a mantle of squirrel's fur riding beside a wonderful proud lady,

whose tiny hat was embroidered with pearls. It was all very interesting to watch, it was like turning over the leaves of a book written in an unknown tongue and guessing what the pictures meant, because these people were intent upon their private avocations, in which you had no part, and you would never see them any more.

Then destiny took a hand in the affair and Guido came. He reined his gray horse at the sight of her sitting by the wayside and deferentially inquired how far it might be to the nearest inn. Graciosa told him. He thanked her and rode on. That was all, but the appraising glance of this sedate and handsome burgher had been well rewarded.

Next day he came again. He was a jewel merchant, he told her, and he thought it within the stretch of possibility that my lord Balthazar's daughter might wish to purchase some of his wares. She viewed them with admiration, chaffered thriftily, and finally bought a topaz, dug from Mount Zabarca, Guido assured her, which rendered its wearer immune to terrors of any kind.

Very often afterward these two met on the outskirts of the forest as Guido rode between the coast and the hill-country about his vocation. Sometimes he laughingly offered her a bargain, on other days he paused to exhibit a notable gem which he had procured for this or that wealthy amateur. Count Eglamore, the young Duke's favorite yonder at court, bought most of them, it seemed. "The nobles complain against this upstart Eglamore very bitterly," said Guido, "but we merchants have no quarrel with him. He buys too lavishly."

"I trust I shall not see Count Eglamore when I go to court," said Graciosa, meditatively; "and, indeed, by that time, my father assures me some honest gentleman will have contrived to cut the throat of this abominable Eglamore." Her father's people, it should be premised, had been at bitter feud with the favorite ever since he detected and punished the conspiracy of the Marquis of Cibo, their kinsman. Then Graciosa continued: "Nevertheless, I shall see many beautiful sights when I am taken to court. . . . And the Duke, too, you tell me, is an amateur of gems."

"Eh, madonna, I wish that you could see his jewels," cried Guido,

growing fervent; and he lovingly catalogued a host of lapidary marvels.

"I hope that I shall see these wonderful jewels when I go to court," said Graciosa wistfully.

"Duke Alessandro," he returned, his dark eyes strangely mirthful, "is, as I take it, a catholic lover of beauty in all its forms. So he will show you his gems, very assuredly, and, worse still, he will make verses in your honor. For it is a preposterous feature of Duke Alessandro's character that he is always making songs."

"Oh, and such strange songs as they are, too, Guido. Who does not know them?"

"I am not the best possible judge of his verses' merit," Guido estimated drily. "But I shall never understand how any singer at all came to be locked in such a prison. I fancy that at times the paradox puzzles even Duke Alessandro."

"And is he as handsome as people report?"

Then Guido laughed a little. "Tastes differ, of course. But I think your father will assure you, madonna, that no duke possessing such a zealous tax-collector as Count Eglamore was ever in his lifetime considered of repulsive person."

"And is he young?"

"Why, as to that, he is about of an age with me, and in consequence old enough to be far more sensible than either of us is ever likely to be," said Guido; and began to talk of other matters.

But presently Graciosa was questioning him again as to the court, whither she was to go next year and enslave a marquis, or, at worst, an opulent baron. Her talk turned toward the court's predominating figure. "Tell me of Eglamore, Guido."

"Madonna, some say that Eglamore was a brewer's son. Others —and your father's kinsmen in particular,—insist that he was begot by a devil in person, just as Merlin was, and Plato the philosopher, and puissant Alexander. Nobody knows anything about his origin."

Guido was sitting upon the ground, his open pack between his knees. Between the thumb and forefinger of each hand he held caressingly a string of pearls which he inspected as he talked.

"Nobody," he idly said, "nobody is very eager to discuss Count Eglamore's origin now that Eglamore has become indispensable to

Duke Alessandro. Yes, it is thanks to Eglamore that the Duke has ample leisure and needful privacy for the pursuit of recreations which are reputed to be curious."

"I do not understand you, Guido." Graciosa was all wonder.

"It is perhaps as well," the merchant said, a trifle sadly. Then Guido shrugged. "To be brief, madonna, business annoys the Duke. He finds in this Eglamore an industrious person who affixes seals, draughts proclamations, signs treaties, musters armies, devises pageants, and collects revenues, upon the whole, quite as efficiently as Alessandro would be capable of doing these things. So Alessandro makes verses and amuses himself as his inclinations prompt, and Alessandro's people are none the worse off on account of it."

"Heigho, I foresee that I shall never fall in love with the Duke," Graciosa declared. "It is unbefitting and it is a little cowardly for a prince to shirk the duties of his station. Now, if I were Duke I would grant my father a pension, and have Eglamore hanged, and purchase a new gown of silvery green, in which I would be ravishingly beautiful, and afterward— Why, what would you do if you were Duke, Messer Guido?"

"What would I do if I were Duke?" he echoed. "What would I do if I were a great lord instead of a tradesman? I think you know the answer, madonna."

"Oh, you would make me your duchess, of course. That is quite understood," said Graciosa, with the lightest of laughs. "But I was speaking seriously, Guido."

Guido at that considered her intently for a half-minute. His countenance was of portentous gravity, but in his eyes one might detect a lurking impishness.

The jewel merchant said: "And it is not a serious matter that a peddler of crystals should have dared to love a nobleman's daughter? You are perfectly right. That I worship you is an affair which does not concern any person save myself in any way whatsoever, although I think that knowledge of the fact would put your father to the trouble of sharpening his dagger. . . . Indeed, I am not certain that I worship you, for in order to adore whole-heartedly, the idolater must believe his idol to be perfect. Now, your nails are of an ugly shape, like that of little fans; your mouth is too large; and I have long ago perceived that you are a trifle lame in spite of

your constant care to conceal the fact. I do not admire these faults, for faults they are undoubtedly. Then, too, I know you are vain and self-seeking, and look forward contentedly to the time when your father will transfer his ownership of such physical attractions as Heaven gave you to that nobleman who offers the highest price for them. It is true you have no choice in the matter, but you will participate in a monstrous bargain, and I would prefer to have you exhibit distaste for it." And with that he returned composedly to inspection of his pearls.

"And to what end, Guido?" It was the first time Graciosa had completely waived the reticence of a superior caste. You saw that the child's parted lips were tremulous, and you divined her childish fits of dreading that glittering, inevitable court-life shared with an unimaginable husband.

But Guido only grumbled whimsically. "I am afraid that men do not always love according to the strict laws of logic. I desire your happiness above all things; yet to see you so abysmally untroubled by anything that troubles me is another matter."

"But I am not untroubled, Guido—" she began swiftly. Graciosa broke off in speech, shrugged, flashed a smile at him. "For I cannot fathom you, Ser Guido, and that troubles me. Yes, I am very fond of you, and yet I do not trust you. You tell me you love me greatly. It pleases me to have you say this. You perceive I am very candid this morning, Messer Guido. Yes, it pleases me, and I know that for the sake of seeing me you daily endanger your life, for if my father heard of our meetings he would have you killed. You would not incur such hare-brained risks unless you cared very greatly; and yet, somehow, I do not believe it is altogether for me you care."

Then Guido was in train to protest an all-mastering and entirely candid devotion, but he was interrupted.

"Most women have these awkward intuitions," spoke a melodious voice.

Turning, Graciosa met the eyes of the intruder. This magnificent young man had a proud and bloodless face which contrasted sharply with his painted lips and cheeks. In the contour of his protruding mouth showed plainly his negroid ancestry. His scanty beard, as well as his frizzled hair, was the color of dead grass. He was sump-

tuously clothed in white satin worked with silver, and around his cap was a gold chain hung with diamonds. Now he handed his fringed riding-gloves to Guido to hold.

"Yes, madonna, I suspect that Eglamore here cares greatly for the fact that you are Lord Balthazar's daughter, and cousin to the late Marquis of Cibo. For Cibo has many kinsmen at court who still resent the circumstance that the matching of his wits against the wits of Eglamore earned for Cibo an unpleasantly public death. So they conspired against Eglamore with vexatious industry, as an upstart, as a nobody thrust over people of proven descent, and Eglamore goes about in hourly apprehension of a knife-thrust. If he could make a match with you, though, your father—thrifty man! —would be easily appeased. Your cousins, those proud, grumbling Castel-Franchi, Strossi and Valori, would not prove over-obdurate toward a kinsman who, whatever his past indiscretions, has so many pensions and offices at his disposal. Yes, honor would permit a truce, and Eglamore could bind them to his interests within ten days, and be rid of the necessity of sleeping in chain armor. . . . Have I not unraveled the scheme correctly, Eglamore?"

"Your highness was never lacking in penetration," replied the other in a dull voice.

Guido stood motionless, holding the gloves, his shoulders a little bowed as if under some physical load. His eyes were fixed upon the ground. He divined the change in Graciosa's face, and he did not care to see it.

"And so you are Count Eglamore," said Graciosa. "That is very strange. I had thought you were my friend, Guido. But I forget. I must not call you Guido any longer."

She gave a little shiver here. He stayed motionless and did not look at her. Then Graciosa said:

"I have often wondered what manner of man you were. So it was you—whose hand I touched just now,—you who poisoned Duke Cosmo, you who had the good cardinal assassinated, you who betrayed the brave lord of Faenza! Oh, yes, they openly accuse you of every imaginable crime,—this patient Eglamore, this reptile who has crept into his power through filthy passages. It is very strange you should be capable of so much wickedness, for to me you seem only a sullen lackey."

He winced and raised his eyes at this. His face remained expressionless. He knew these accusations at least to be demonstrable lies, for, as it happened, he had never found his advancement to hinge upon the commission of the crimes named. But even so, the past was a cemetery he did not care to have revivified.

"And it was you who detected the Marquis of Cibo's conspiracy. Tebaldeo was my cousin, Count Eglamore, and I loved him. We were reared together. We used to play here in the woods, and I remember how Tebaldeo once fetched me a wren's nest from that maple yonder. I stood just here. I was weeping because I was afraid he would fall. If he had fallen and been killed, it would have been the luckier for him."

Eglamore spoke now. "Cibo conspired against the Duke—"

Graciosa answered: "They say that he conspired. I do not know. I only know that by your orders, Count Eglamore, my playmate Tebaldeo was fastened upon a Saint Andrew's cross and his arms and legs were each broken in two places with an iron bar. Then your servants took Tebaldeo, still living, and laid him upon a carriage-wheel which was hung upon a pivot. The upper edge of this wheel was cut with very fine teeth like those of a saw, so that his agony might be complete. Tebaldeo's poor mangled legs were folded beneath his body so that his heels touched the back of his head, they tell me. In such a posture he died very slowly while the wheel turned very slowly there in the sunlit market-place, and flies buzzed greedily about him, and the shopkeepers took holiday in order to watch Tebaldeo die,—the same Tebaldeo who once fetched me a wren's nest from yonder maple."

Eglamore spoke again. "I gave orders for the Marquis of Cibo's execution. I did not devise the manner of his death. The punishment for Cibo's crime was long ago fixed by our laws. Cibo plotted to kill the Duke. Cibo confessed as much."

But the girl waved this aside. "And then you plan this masquerade. You plan to make me care for you so greatly that even when I know you to be Count Eglamore I must still care for you. You plan to marry me, so as to placate Tebaldeo's kinsmen, so as to bind them to your interests. It was a fine bold stroke of policy, I know, to use me as a stepping-stone to safety—"

Her voice rose now a little. She seemed to plead with him.

"Look you, Count Eglamore, I was a child only yesterday. I have never loved any man. But you have loved many women, I know, and long experience has taught you many ways of moving a woman's heart. Oh, was it fair, was it worth while, to match your skill against my ignorance? Think how unhappy I would be if even now I loved you, and how I would loathe myself. . . . But I am getting angry over nothing. Nothing has happened except that I have dreamed in idle moments of a brave and comely lover who held his head so high that all other women envied me; and now I have awakened."

Meanwhile, it was with tears in his eyes that the young man in white had listened to her quiet talk, for you could nowhere have found a nature more readily sensitive than his to all the beauty and wonder which life, as if it were haphazardly, produces every day. He seemed now to pity this betrayed child quite ineffably, because in her sorrow she was so pretty.

And he spoke consolingly. "Fie, Donna Graciosa, you must not be too harsh with Eglamore. It is his nature to scheme, and he weaves his plots as inevitably as the spider does her web. Believe me, it is wiser to forget the rascal—as I do,—until there is need of him; and I think you will have no more need to consider Eglamore's trickeries, for you are very beautiful, Graciosa."

He had drawn closer to the girl, and he brought a cloying odor of frangipani, bergamot and vervain. His nostrils quivered, his face had taken on an odd pinched look.

"Oh, do not be offended," the painted man pursued, "for I have some right to say what I desire in these parts. *Dei gratia,* I am the overlord of these parts, Graciosa,—a neglected prince who wondered over the frequent absences of his chief counselor and secretly set spies upon him. Eglamore here will attest as much. Or if you cannot believe poor Eglamore any longer, I shall have other witnesses within the half-hour. Oh, yes, they are to meet me here at noon,—some twenty crop-haired stalwart cut-throats. They will come riding upon beautiful broad-chested horses covered with red velvet trappings that are hung with little silver bells which jingle delightfully. They will come very soon, and then we will ride back to court."

Duke Alessandro touched his big painted mouth with his fore-

finger as if in fantastic mimicry of a man imparting a confidence.

"I think that I shall take you with me, Graciosa, for you are wholly beautiful. You are as slim as a lily and more white, and your eyes are two purple mirrors in each of which I see a tiny image of Duke Alessandro. The woman I loved yesterday was a big splendid wench with cheeks like apples. It is not desirable that women should be so large. All women should be little creatures that fear you. They should have thin, plaintive voices, and in shrinking from you be as slight to the touch as a cobweb. It is not possible to love a woman ardently unless you comprehend how easy it would be to murder her."

"God, God!" said Count Eglamore, very softly, for he was familiar with the look which had now come into Duke Alessandro's face.

Indeed, all persons about the court of Florence were quick to notice this odd pinched look, like that of a traveler nipped at by frosts; and people at court became obsequious within the instant in dealing with the fortunate woman who had aroused this look, Count Eglamore remembered.

Now the girl did not speak at all, but stood motionless, staring in a bewildered and childlike fashion, and the color had ebbed from her countenance.

Alessandro was frankly pleased. "You fear me, do you not, Graciosa? See, now, when I touch your hand it is soft and cold as a serpent's skin, and you shudder. I am very tired of women who love me, of all women with bold, hungry eyes. To you my touch will be a martyrdom, you will loathe me, and therefore I shall not weary of you for a long while. Come, Graciosa! Your father shall have all the wealth and state that even his greedy imaginings can devise, so long as you can contrive to loathe me. We will find you a suitable husband. You shall have flattery and titles, gold and fine glass, soft stuffs and superb palaces such as are your beauty's due henceforward."

He glanced at the peddler's pack, and shrugged. "So Eglamore has been wooing you with jewels! You must see mine, dear Graciosa. It is not merely an affair of possessing, as some emperors do, all the four kinds of sapphires, the twelve kinds of emeralds, the three kinds of rubies, and many extraordinary pearls, diamonds, cymophanes, beryls, green peridots, tyanos, sandrastra, and fiery cinna-

mon-stones"—he enumerated them with the tender voice of their lover,—"for the value of these may at least be estimated. Oh, no, I have in my possession gems which have not their fellows in any other collection, gems which have not even a name and the value of which is incalculable,—strange jewels that were shot from inaccessible mountain peaks by means of slings, jewels engendered by the thunder, jewels taken from the heart of the Arabian deer, jewels cut from the brain of a toad and the eyes of serpents, and even jewels that are authentically known to have fallen from the moon. We will select the rarest, and have a pair of slippers encrusted with them, in which you shall dance for me, in a room that I know of—"

"Highness," cried Eglamore, with anger and terror at odds in his breast, "highness, I love this girl!"

"Ah, then you cannot ever be her husband," Duke Alessandro returned. "You would have suited otherwise. No, no, we must seek out some other person of discretion. It will all be very amusing, for I think that she is now quite innocent, as pure as the high angels are. See, Eglamore, she cannot speak, she stays still as a lark that has been taken in a snare. It will be very marvelous to make her as I am. . . ." He meditated, as if obscurely aware of opposition, his shoulders twitched fretfully, and momentarily his eyes lightened like the glare of a cannon through its smoke. "You made a beast of me, some long-faced people say. Beware lest the beast turn and rend you."

Count Eglamore plucked aimlessly at his chin. Then he laughed as a dog yelps. He dropped the gloves which he had held till this time, deliberately, as if the act were a rite. His shoulders straightened and purpose seemed to flow into the man.

"No," Eglamore said quietly, "I will not have it. It was not altogether I who made a brain-sick beast of you, my prince; but even so, I have never been too nice to profit by your vices. I have taken my thrifty toll of abomination, I have stood by contentedly, not urging you on, yet never trying to stay you, as you waded deeper and ever deeper into the filth of your debaucheries, because meanwhile you left me so much power. Yes, in some part it is my own handiwork which is my ruin. I accept it. Nevertheless, you shall not harm this child."

"I venture to remind you, Eglamore, that I am still Duke of Florence."

Alessandro was languidly amused, and had begun to regard his adversary with real curiosity. Eglamore replied:

"Oh, yes; but that is nothing to me. At court you are the master. At court I have seen mothers raise the veil from their daughters' faces, with smiles that were more loathsome than the grimaces of a fiend, because you happened to be passing. But here in these woods, your highness, I see only the woman I love and the man who has insulted her."

"This is very admirable fooling," the Duke considered. "So all the world is changed and Pandarus is transformed into Hector? These are sonorous words, Eglamore, but with what deeds do you propose to back them?"

"By killing you, your highness."

"So!" said the Duke. "The farce ascends in interest."

He drew with a flourish, with actual animation, for sottish, debauched and power-crazed as this man was, he came of a race to whom danger was a cordial.

"Very luckily, Eglamore, a sword forms part of your disguise, so let us amuse ourselves. It is always diverting to kill; and if by any chance you kill me I shall at least be rid of the intolerable knowledge that to-morrow will be just like to-day."

The Duke at that descended blithely into the level road and placed himself on guard.

Then both men silently went about the business in hand. Both were oddly calm, almost as if preoccupied by some more important matter to be settled later. The two swords clashed, gleamed rigidly for an instant, and their rapid interplay, so far as vision went, melted into a flickering snarl of silver, for the sun was high and each man's shadow was huddled under him. But by and by Eglamore thrust savagely and in the act trod the edge of a puddle, and fell ignominiously prostrate. His sword was wrenched ten feet from him, for the Duke had parried skilfully. Eglamore lay thus at Alessandro's mercy.

"Well, well!" the Duke cried petulantly, "and am I to be kept waiting forever? You were a thought quicker in obeying my ca-

prices yesterday. Get up, you muddy lout, and let us kill each other with some pretention of adroitness."

Eglamore rose, and, sobbing, caught up his sword and rushed toward the Duke in an agony of shame and rage. His attack now was that of a frenzied animal, quite careless of defense and desirous only of murder. Twice the Duke wounded him, but it was Alessandro who drew backward, composedly hindering the brutal onslaught he was powerless to check. Then Eglamore ran him through the chest and gave vent to a strangled, growling cry as Alessandro fell.

Eglamore wrenched his sword free and grasped it by the blade so that he might stab the Duke again and again. He meant to hack the abominable flesh, to slash and mutilate that haughty mask of infamy, but Graciosa clutched his weapon by the hilt.

The girl panted, and her breath came thick. "He gave you your life."

Eglamore looked up. She leaned now upon his shoulder, her face brushing his as he knelt over the unconscious Duke; and Eglamore found that at her dear touch all passion had gone out of him.

"Madonna," he said equably, "the Duke is not yet dead. It is impossible to let him live. You may think he voiced only a caprice just now. I think so too, but I know the man, and I know that all this madman's whims are ruthless and irresistible. Living, Duke Alessandro's appetites are merely whetted by opposition, so much so that he finds no pleasures sufficiently piquant unless they have God's interdiction as a sauce. Living, he will make of you his plaything, and a little later his broken, soiled, and cast by plaything. It is therefore necessary that I kill Duke Alessandro."

She parted from him, and he too rose to his feet.

"And afterward," she said quietly, "and afterward you must die just as Tebaldeo died."

"That is the law, madonna. But whether Alessandro enters hell to-day or later, I am a lost man."

"Oh, that is very true," she said. "A moment since you were Count Eglamore, whom every person feared. Now there is not a beggar in the kingdom who would change lots with you, for you are a friendless and hunted man in peril of dreadful death. But even so, you are not penniless, Count Eglamore, for these jewels

here which formed part of your masquerade are of great value, and there is a world outside. The frontier is not two miles distant. You have only to escape into the hill-country beyond the forest, and you need not kill Duke Alessandro after all. I would have you go hence with hands as clean as possible."

"Yes; it is true I hope to escape from Tuscany." He found it quaint to note how calm she was and how tranquilly his own thoughts ran. "I travel north to Bologna, and then to Venice, which is at war with Alessandro. But first the Duke must die, because I dare not leave you to the arrogance of his lust."

"How does that matter?" she returned. "You know very well that my father intends to market me as best suits his interests. Here I am so much merchandise. The Duke is as free as any other man to cry a bargain."

He would have spoken in protest, but Graciosa interrupted wearily: "Oh, yes, it is to this end only that we daughters of Duke Alessandro's vassals are nurtured, just as you told me—eh, how long ago!—that such physical attractions as Heaven accords us may be marketed. And I do not see how a wedding can in any way ennoble the transaction by causing it to profane a holy sacrament. Ah, no, Balthazar's daughter was near attaining all that she had been taught to desire, for a purchaser came and he bid lavishly. You know very well that my father would have been delighted. But you must need upset the bargain. 'No, I will not have it!' Count Eglamore must cry. It cost you very highly to speak those words. I think it would have puzzled my father to hear those words at which so many fertile lands, stout castles, well-timbered woodlands, herds of cattle, gilded coaches, liveries and curious tapestries, fine clothing and spiced foods, all vanished like a puff of smoke. Ah, yes, my father would have thought you mad."

"I had no choice," he said, and waved a little gesture of impotence. He spoke as with difficulty, almost wearily. "I love you. It is a theme on which I do not embroider. So long as I had thought to use you as an instrument I could woo fluently enough. To-day I saw that you were frightened and helpless. And something changed in me. I knew for the first time that I loved you and that I was not clean as you are clean. What it was of passion and horror, of despair and adoration and yearning, which struggled in my

being then I cannot tell you. It spurred me to such action as I took,—but it has robbed me of sugared eloquence, it has left me chary of speech. It is necessary that I climb very high because of my love for you, and upon the heights there is silence."

And Graciosa meditated. "Here I am so much merchandise. Heigho, since I cannot help it, since bought and sold I must be, one day or another, at least I will go at a noble price. Yet I do not think I am quite worth the value of these castles and lands and other things which you gave up because of me, so that it will be necessary to make up the difference, dear, by loving you very much."

At that he touched her chin, gently and masterfully, for Graciosa would have averted her face, and it seemed to Eglamore that he could never have his fill of gazing on the radiant, shamed tenderness of Graciosa's face. "Oh, my girl!" he whispered. "Oh, my wonderful, worshiped, merry girl, whom God has fashioned with such loving care! you who had only scorn to give me when I was a kingdom's master! and would you go with me now that I am friendless and homeless?"

"But I shall always have a friend," she answered,—"a friend who showed me what Balthazar's daughter was and what love is. And I am vain enough to believe I shall not ever be very far from home so long as I am near to my friend's heart."

A mortal man could not but take her in his arms.

"Farewell, Duke Alessandro!" then said Eglamore; "farewell, poor clay so plastic the least touch remodels you! I had a part in shaping you so bestial; our age, too, had a part,—our bright and cruel day, wherein you were set too high. Yet for me it would perhaps have proved as easy to have made a learned recluse of you, Alessandro, or a bloodless saint, if to do that had been as patently profitable. For you and all your kind are so much putty in the hands of circumspect fellows such as I. But I stood by and let our poisoned age conform that putty into the shape of a crazed beast, because it took that form as readily as any other, and in taking it, best served my selfish ends. Now I must pay for that sorry shaping, just as, I think, you too must pay some day. And so, I cry farewell with loathing, but with compassion also!"

Then these two turned toward the hills, leaving Duke Alessandro

where he lay in the road, a very lamentable figure in much bloodied finery. They turned toward the hills, and entered a forest whose ordering was time's contemporary, and where there was no grandeur save that of the trees.

But upon the summit of the nearest hill they paused and looked over a restless welter of foliage that glittered in the sun, far down into the highway. It bustled like an unroofed ant-hill, for the road was alive with men who seemed from this distance strangely small.

Duke Alessandro's attendants had found him and were clustered in a hubbub about their reviving master. Dwarfish Lorenzino de Medici, who murdered the Duke some four years later, was the most solicitous among them.

Beyond was the broad river, seen as a ribbon of silver now, and on its remoter bank the leaded roofs of a strong fortress glistened like a child's new toy. Tilled fields showed here and there, no larger in appearance than so many outspread handkerchiefs. Far down in the east a small black smudge upon the pearl-colored and vaporous horizon was all they could discern of a walled city filled with factories for the working of hemp and furs and alum and silk and bitumen.

"It is a very rich and lovely land," said Eglamore—"this kingdom which a half-hour since lay in the hollow of my hand."

He viewed it for a while, and not without pensiveness. Then he took Graciosa's hand, he looked into her face, and he laughed joyously.

FROM

The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck

INTRODUCES AN APOLOGUE

OF THE GESTURE CALLED MANLINESS

THE ONE THING LACKING

THE RIVET IN GRANDFATHER'S NECK *is so coherent and well plotted that a selection from it does not offer a suggestive fragment of the whole, as indeed it was impossible, even had the boundaries of a manageable volume permitted, to take any fairly representative passage from* The Eagle's Shadow, The High Place, Domnei, *or* The Cords of Vanity. *The first of the three chapters here selected gives us the apologue, the charming parable from Hans Christian Andersen to which Cabell's romance owes its title. The two scenes that follow are pleasantly old-fashioned, though quite unhackneyed lovemaking. This comedy of a kind of chivalry which has lingered beyond its proper day in the world comes the nearest of all Cabell's books to being a direct commentary on life as men and women in a time only recently vanished actually experienced it. We have an intimate affection for Patricia and for Colonel Musgrave, who, from the day when he thrashes one importunate lover to the day when he firmly and in fine masculine manner defeats another, is every inch an admirable man. And a definite social era in a limited provincial setting is fixed and visualized with a solid finality which may prove to have as much of the quality of literary permanence as any of Cabell's dreams embracing wider worlds and limitless reaches of time.*

J. M.

INTRODUCES AN APOLOGUE

They passed with incredible celerity, those next ten days,—those strange, delicious, topsy-turvy days. To Rudolph Musgrave it seemed afterward that he had dreamed them away in some vague Lotus Land,—in a delectable country where, he remembered, there were always purple eyes that mocked you, and red lips that coaxed you now, and now cast gibes at you.

You felt, for the most part of your stay in this country, flushed and hot and uncomfortable and unbelievably awkward, and you were mercilessly bedeviled there; but not for all the accumulated wealth of Samarkand and Ind and Ophir would you have had matters otherwise. Ah, no, not otherwise in the least trifle. For now, uplifted to a rosy zone of acquiescence, you partook incuriously at table of nectar and ambrosia, and noted abroad, without any surprise, that you trod upon a more verdant grass than usual, and that someone had polished up the sun a bit; and, in fine, you snatched a fearful joy from the performance of the most trivial functions of life.

Yet always he remembered that it could not last; always he remembered that in the autumn Patricia was to marry Lord Pevensey. She sometimes gave him letters to mail which were addressed to that nobleman. He wondered savagely what was in them; he posted them with a vicious shove; and, for the time, they caused him acute twinges of misery. But not for long; no, for, in sober earnest, if some fantastic sequence of events had made his one chance of winning Patricia Stapylton dependent on his spending a miserable half-hour in her company, Rudolph Musgrave could not have done it.

As for Miss Stapylton, she appeared to delight in the cloistered, easy-going life of Lichfield. The quaint and beautiful old town fell short in nothing of her expectations, in spite of the fact that she had

previously read John Charteris's tales of Lichfield,—"those effusions which" (if the *Lichfield Courier-Herald* is to be trusted) "have builded, by the strength and witchery of record and rhyme, romance and poem, a myriad-windowed temple in Lichfield's honor—exquisite, luminous, and enduring,—for all the world to see."

Miss Stapylton appeared to delight in the cloistered, easy-going life of Lichfield,—that town which had been once, as the outside world had half-forgotten now, the center of America's wealth, politics and culture, the town to which Europeans compiling "impressions" of America devoted one of their longest chapters in the heyday of Elijah Pogram and Jefferson Brick. But the War Between the States has changed all that, and Lichfield endured only as a pleasant backwater.

Very pleasant, too, it was in the days of Patricia's advent. There were strikingly few young men about, to be sure; most of them on reaching maturity had settled in more bustling regions. But many maidens remained whom memory delights to catalogue,—tall, brilliant Lizzie Allardyce, the lovely and cattish Marian Winwood (to whom Felix Kennaston wrote those wonderful love-letters which she published when he married Kathleen Saumarez), the rich Baugh heiress from Georgia, the Pride twins, and Amelia Van Orden (whom even rival beauties loved, they say), and other damsels by the score,—all in due time to be wooed and won, and then to pass out of the old town's life.

Among the men of Rudolph Musgrave's generation—those gallant oldsters who were born, and bred, and meant to die, in Lichfield,—Patricia did not lack for admirers. George Bulmer was one of them, of course; rarely a pretty face escaped the tribute of at least one proposal from George Bulmer. Then there was Roderick Bulmer, too, he with the leonine mane, who spared her none of his forensic eloquence, but found Patricia less tractable than the most stubborn of juries. Bluff Walter Thurman, also, who was said to know more of Dickens, whist and criminal law than any other man living, came to worship at her shrine, as likewise did huge red-faced Ashby Bland, famed for that cavalry charge which history-books tell you that he led, and at which he actually was not present, for reasons all Lichfield knew and chuckled over. And Courtney Thorpe and Charles Bellingham, doctors of the flesh and the spirit

severally, were others among the rivals who gathered about Patricia at decorous festivals when, candles lighted, the butler and his underlings came with trays of delectable things to eat, and the "nests" of tables were set out, and pleasant chatter abounded.

And among Patricia's attendants Colonel Musgrave, it is needless to relate, was preëminently pertinacious. The two found a deal to talk about, somehow, though it is doubtful if many of their comments were of sufficient importance or novelty to merit record. Then, also, he often read aloud to her from lovely books, for the Colonel read admirably and did not scruple to give emotional passages their value. *Trilby,* published the preceding spring in book form, was one of these books, for all this was at a very remote period; and the *Rubaiyat* was another, for that poem was as yet unhackneyed, and hardly well-known enough to be parodied, in those happy days.

Once he read to her that wonderful sad tale by Hans Christian Andersen which treats of the china chimney-sweep and the shepherdess, who eloped from their bedizened, tiny parlor table, and who were frightened by the vastness of the world outside, and thus crept ignominiously back to their fit home. "And so," the Colonel ended, "the little china people remained together, and were thankful for the rivet in grandfather's neck, and continued to love each other until they were broken to pieces."

"It was really a very lucky thing," Patricia estimated, "that the grandfather had a rivet in his neck and couldn't nod to the billy-goat-legged person to take the shepherdess away into his cupboard. I don't doubt the little china people were glad of it. But after climbing so far—and seeing the stars,—I think they ought to have had more to be glad for."

"I will let you into a secret—er—Patricia. That rivet was made out of the strongest material in the whole universe. And the old grandfather was glad, at bottom, he had it in his neck so that he could not nod and separate the shepherdess from the chimney-sweep."

"Yes,—I guess he had been rather a rip among the bric-à-brac in his day and sympathized with them?"

"No, it was not just that. You see, these little china people had forsaken their orderly comfortable world on the parlor table, to

climb very high. It was a brave thing to do, even though they faltered and came back after a while. It is what we all want to do, Patricia,—to climb toward the stars,—even those of us who are too lazy or too cowardly to attempt it. And when others try it, we are envious and a little uncomfortable, and we probably scoff; but we cannot help admiring, even so, these more actively aspiring persons; and there is a rivet in the neck of all of us which prevents us from interfering. In fact, we little china people have a large variety of rivets, thank God, to prevent too frequent nodding and too cowardly a compromise with baseness,—rivets that are a part of us and force us into flashes of upright living, almost in spite of ourselves, when duty and inclination grapple. There is always the thing which one cannot do for the reason that one is constituted as one is. That, I take it, is the real rivet in grandfather's neck and everybody else's."

He spoke disjointedly, vaguely; but the girl nodded. "I think I understand, Olaf. Only, it is a two-edged rivet—to mix metaphors,—and it keeps us stiffnecked against all sorts of calls. No; I am not sure that the thing one cannot do because one is what one is, proves to be always a cause for international jubilations and fireworks on the lawn."

OF THE GESTURE CALLED MANLINESS

A CURIOUS small heartache accompanied Colonel Musgrave on his way home that afternoon. He had not seen Patricia Stapylton for twenty-four hours, and he was just beginning to comprehend what his future life would be like without her. He did not find the prospect exhilarating.

Then, as he came up the orderly graveled walk, he heard, issuing from the little vine-covered summer-house, a loud voice. It was a man's voice, and its tones were angry.

"No!" the man was saying; "I will agree to no such nonsense, I tell you! What do you think I am?"

"I think you are a jackass-fool," Miss Stapylton said, crisply, "and a fortune-hunter, and a sot, and a travesty, and a whole heap of other things I haven't as yet had time to look up in the dictionary. And I think—I think you call yourself an English gentleman? Well, all I have to say is, God pity England if her gentlemen are of your stamp! There isn't a costermonger in all Whitechapel who would dare talk to me as you've done! I would like to snatch you bald-headed, I would like to kill you— And do you think, now, if you were the very last man left in all the world that I— No, don't you try to answer me, for I don't wish to hear a single word you have to say. Oh, but how dare you!"

"Well, I've had provocation enough," the man's voice retorted, sullenly. "Perhaps I have cut up a bit rough, Patricia, but, then, you've been talkin' like a fool, you know. But what's the odds? Let's kiss and make up, old girl."

"Don't touch me!" she panted; "ah, don't you dare!"

"You little devil! you infernal little vixen! You'll jilt me, will you?"

"Let me go!" the girl cried, sharply. Rudolph Musgrave went into the summer-house.

The man whom Colonel Musgrave found there was big and loose-jointed, with traces of puffiness about his face. He had wheat-colored hair and weakish-looking, pale blue eyes. One of his arms was about Miss Stapylton, but he released her now, and he blinked at Rudolph Musgrave.

"And who are you, eh?" he demanded, querulously. "What do you want, anyhow? What do you mean by sneakin' in here and tappin' on a fellow's shoulder—like a damn' woodpecker, by Jove! I don't know you."

There was in Colonel Musgrave's voice a curious tremor, when he spoke; but to the eye he was unruffled, even faintly amused.

"I am the owner of this garden," he enunciated, with leisurely distinctness, "and it is not my custom to permit gentlewomen to be insulted in it. So I am afraid I must ask you to leave it."

"Now, see here," the other answered, "we don't want any heroics, you know. See here, you're her cousin, ain't you? By God, I'll leave it to you, you know! She's treated me badly. She's a jilt, eh? She's playin' fast and loose—"

He never got any farther, for at this point Rudolph Musgrave took him by the coat-collar and half-dragged, half-pushed him through the garden, shaking him occasionally with a quiet emphasis. The Colonel was angry, and it was a matter of utter indifference to him that they were trampling over flower-beds, and leaving havoc in their rear.

But when they had reached the side-entrance, he paused and opened it, and then shoved his companion into an open field, where a number of cows, fresh from the evening milking, regarded them with incurious eyes. It was very quiet here, save for the occasional jangle of the cow-bells and the far-off fifing of frogs in the marsh below.

"It would have been impossible, of course," said Colonel Musgrave, "for me to have offered you any personal violence as long as you were, in a manner, a guest of mine. This field, however, is the property of Judge Willoughby, and here I feel at liberty to thrash you."

Then he thrashed the man who had annoyed Patricia Stapylton.

That thrashing was, in its way, a masterpiece. There was a conscientiousness about it and a certain thoroughness of execution—a

plodding and a painstaking carefulness, in a word, such as is possible only to one who has devoted years to the laborious small niceties of genealogical work.

"You ought to exercise more," Rudolph Musgrave admonished his victim, when he had ended. "You are entirely too flabby now. That path yonder will take you to the hotel, where, I imagine, you are staying. There is a train leaving Lichfield at six-fifteen, and if I were you, I would be very careful not to miss that train. Good-evening. I am sorry to have been compelled to thrash you, but I must admit I have enjoyed it exceedingly."

Then he went back into the garden.

In the shadow of a white lilac-bush, Colonel Musgrave paused, with an awed face.

"Good Lord!" said he, aghast at the notion; "what would Agatha say if she knew I had been fighting like a drunken truck-driver! Or, rather, what would she refrain from saying! Only, she would not believe it of me. And, for the matter of that," Rudolph Musgrave continued, after a moment's reflection, "I would not have believed it of myself a week ago. I think I am changing, somehow. A week ago I would have fetched in the police and sworn out a warrant; and, if the weather had been as damp as it is, I would have waited to put on my rubbers before I would have done that much."

THE ONE THING LACKING

He found her still in the summer-house, expectant of him, it seemed, her lips parted, her eyes glowing. Rudolph Musgrave, looking down into twin vivid depths, for a breathing-space, found time to rejoice that he had refused to liken them to stars. Stars, forsooth! —and, pray, what paltry sun, what irresponsible comet, what pallid, clinkered satellite, might boast a purple splendor such as this? For all asterial scintillations, at best, had but a claptrap glitter; whereas the glow of Patricia's eyes was a matter worthy of really serious attention.

"What have you done with him, Olaf?" the girl breathed, quickly.

"I reasoned with him," said Colonel Musgrave. "Oh, I found him quite amenable to logic. He is leaving Lichfield this evening, I think."

Thereupon Miss Stapylton began to laugh. "Yes," said she, "you must have remonstrated very feelingly. Your tie's all crooked, Olaf dear, and your hair's all rumpled, and there's dust all over your coat. You would disgrace a rag-bag. Oh, I'm glad you reasoned—that way! It wasn't dignified, but it was dear of you, Olaf. Pevensey's a beast."

He caught his breath at this. "Pevensey!" he stammered; "the Earl of Pevensey!—the man you are going to marry!"

"Dear me, no!" Miss Stapylton answered, with utmost unconcern; "I would sooner marry a toad. Why, didn't you know, Olaf? I thought, of course, you knew you had been introducing athletics and better manners among the peerage! That sounds like a bill in the House of Commons, doesn't it?" Then Miss Stapylton laughed again, and appeared to be in a state of agreeable, though somewhat nervous, elation. "I wrote to him two days ago," she afterward explained, "breaking off the engagement. So he came down at once and was quite nasty about it."

"You—have broken your engagement," the Colonel echoed, dully; and he continued, with a certain deficiency in finesse, "But I thought you wanted to be a countess?"

"Oh, you boor, you vulgarian!" the girl cried. "You do put things so crudely, Olaf! You are hopeless."

She shook an admonitory forefinger in his direction, and pouted in the most dangerous fashion.

"But he always seemed so nice," she reflected, with puckered brows, "until to-day, you know. I thought he would be eminently suitable. I liked him tremendously until—" and here, a wonderful, tender change came into her face, a wistful quaver woke in her voice,—"until I found there was someone else I liked better."

"Ah!" said Rudolph Musgrave.

So, that was it. Her head was bowed now—her glorious, proud little head,—and she sat silent, an abashed heap of fluffy frills and ruffles, a tiny bundle of vaporous ruchings and filmy tucks and suchlike vanities, in the green dusk of the summer-house.

But he knew. He had seen her face grave and tender in the twilight, and he knew.

She loved some man—some lucky devil! And he knew the love which he had unwittingly spied upon to be august; the shamed exultance of her face and her illumined eyes, the crimson banners that her cheeks had flaunted,—these were to Colonel Musgrave as a piece of sacred pageantry; and before it his misery was awed, his envy went posting to extinction.

Thus the stupid man reflected, and made himself very unhappy over it.

Then, after a little, the girl threw back her head and drew a deep breath, and flashed a tremulous smile at him.

"Ah, yes," said she; "there are better things in life than coronets, aren't there, Olaf?"

"Life!" he replied: "what do I know of life? I am only a recluse, a dreamer, a visionary! You must learn of life from the men who have lived, Patricia. I have not ever lived. I have always chosen the coward's part. I have chosen to shut myself off from the world, to posture in a village all my days, and to consider its trifles as of supreme importance. I have affected to scorn, and to look down upon, as ill-bred and vulgar, that larger outside world in which a

man is proven. And, all the while, I was afraid of it, I think. I was afraid of you before you came."

At the thought of this, Rudolph Musgrave laughed as he fell to pacing up and down before her.

"Life!" he cried, again, with a helpless gesture; and then smiled at her, very sadly. "'Didn't I know there was something better in life than grubbing after musty tribes and customs and folk-songs?'" he quoted. "Why, but what a question to ask of a professional genealogist! Don't you realize, Patricia, that the very bread I eat is, actually, earned by the achievements of people who have been dead for centuries? and in part, of course, by tickling the vanity of living snobs? That constitutes a nice trade for an able-bodied person as long as men are paid for emptying garbage-barrels,—now, doesn't it? And yet it is not altogether for the pay's sake I do it," he added, haltingly. "There really is a fascination about the work. You are really working out a puzzle,—like a fellow solving a chess-problem. It is not really work, it is amusement. And when you are establishing a royal descent, and tracing back to czars and Plantagenets and Merovingians, and making it all seem perfectly plausible, the thing is sheer impudent, flagrant art, and *you* are the artist—"

He broke off here and shrugged. "No, I could hardly make you understand. It does not matter. It is enough that I have bartered youth and happiness and the very power of living for the privilege of grubbing in old county records."

He paused. It is debatable if he had spoken wisely, or had spoken even in consonance with fact, but his outburst had, at least, the saving grace of sincerity. Yet it was an outburst which appeared to puzzle Miss Stapylton.

"I don't quite understand," she murmured. "It isn't as if you were an old man, Olaf. It isn't as if—"

But he had scarcely heard her. "Ah, child, child!" he cried, "why did you come to waken me? I was content in my smug vanities. I was content in my ignorance. I could have gone on contentedly grubbing through my musty, sleepy life here, till death had taken me, if only you had not shown me what life might mean! Ah, child, child, why did you waken me?"

"I?" she breathed; and now the flush of her cheeks had widened, wondrously.

"You! you!" he cried; and he gave a wringing motion of his hands, for the self-esteem of a complacent man is not torn away without agony. "Who else but you? I had thought myself brave enough to be silent, but still I must play the coward's part! That woman I told you of—that woman I loved—was you! Yes, you, you!" he cried, again and again, in a sort of frenzy.

And then, on a sudden, Colonel Musgrave began to laugh.

"It is quite ridiculous, isn't it?" he demanded of her. "Yes, it is very—very funny. Now comes the time to laugh at me! Now comes the time to lift your brows, and to make keen arrows of your eyes, and of your tongue a little red dagger! I have dreamed of this moment many and many a time. So laugh, I say! Laugh, for I have told you that I love you. You are rich, and I am a pauper—you are young, and I am old, remember,—and I love you, who love another man! For the love of God, laugh at me and have done!"

But she came to him, with a wonderful gesture of compassion, and caught his great, shapely hands in hers.

"I knew you cared. I have always known you cared. I would have been an idiot if I hadn't. But, Olaf, I didn't know you cared so much. You frighten me, Olaf," she pleaded, and she raised a tearful face to his. "I am very fond of you, Olaf dear. Oh, don't think I am not fond of you."

And the girl paused for a breathless moment. "I think I might even have married you, Olaf," she said, half-wistfully, "if—if it hadn't been for one thing."

Rudolph Musgrave smiled now, though he found it a difficult business. "Yes," he assented, gravely, "I know, dear. If it were not for the other man—that lucky devil! Yes, he is a very, very lucky devil, child, and he constitutes rather a big 'if,' doesn't he?"

Miss Stapylton, too, smiled a little. "No," said she, "that isn't quite the reason. The real reason is, just as I told you yesterday, that I fail to see how you can expect any woman to marry you, you jay-bird, if you won't go to the trouble of asking her to do so."

And, this time, Miss Stapylton did not go into the house.

FROM

The Cream of the Jest

HORVENDILE TO ETTARRE: AT WHITEHALL

HORVENDILE TO ETTARRE: AT VAUX-LE-VICOMTE

HORVENDILE TO ETTARRE: IN THE CONCIERGERIE

OF ONE ENIGMA THAT THREATENED TO PROVE ALLEGORICAL

IN The Cream of the Jest *the cycle of Manuel and his progeny is rounded off, closed in, retraces its imaginative steps back through the centuries from modern Virginia to Poictesme. Manuel is embodied in Felix Kennaston, a rather soft but highly fanciful form of the original hard old adventurer; Kennaston is also an impersonation of a contemporaneous writer not far to seek; and he is furthermore identified with Horvendile, the roving poet, who is likely to appear almost anywhere and is never comfortably at home anywhere, certainly never with untouchable, evasive and dissolving Ettarre. The annihilation of time, which enables Kennaston-Horvendile to dwell for a moment at any point in history without completely losing knowledge of what happened after that point, is wrought by the sigil of Scoteia, a mysterious and in the end unexplained talisman, an open-sesame which charms wide the door to the past. Three of the four chapters here selected, from Part V, make us present at three instants far up the stream of time, face to face with eminent persons long dead; the fourth leaves us with the enigma of dreams never to be solved, but satisfying, contenting because they afford a moment of happy emotion. The dream is shattered and "who wins his love must lose her," but the dream abides and the love remains in the creative memory of the poet and in the mind of whoever understandingly reads the poet.*

J. M.

HORVENDILE TO ETTARRE: AT WHITEHALL

To Kennaston the Lord Protector was saying, with grave unction: "You will, I doubt not, fittingly express to our friends in Virginia, Master Major, those hearty sentiments which I have in the way of gratefulness, in that I have received the honor and safeguard of their approbation; for all which I humbly thank them. To our unfriends in that colony we will let action speak when I shall have completed God's work in Ireland."

"Yet the Burgesses, sir, are mostly ill-affected," Kennaston found himself saying; "and Berkeley, to grant him justice, does not lack bravery—"

Cromwell replied: "With Heaven's help, Master Major, I have of late dealt with a king who did not lack bravery. Nay, depend upon it, I shall some day grant William Berkeley utter justice,—such justice as I gave his master, that proud curled man, Charles Stuart."

Then the Lord Protector's face was changed, and his harsh countenance became a little troubled. "Yes, I shall do all this, with Heaven's help, I think. But in good faith, I grow old, Master Major. I move in a mist, and my deeds are strange to me. . . ."

Cromwell closed and unclosed his hands, regarding them; and he sighed. Then it was to Ettarre he spoke:

"I leave you in Master Major's charge. It may be I shall not return alive into England; indeed, I grow an old man and feel infirmities of age stealing upon me. And so, farewell, my lass. Truly if I love you not too well, I err not on the other hand much. Thou hast been dearer to me than any other creature: let that suffice."

And with this leave-taking the Lord Protector was gone.

As the door closed upon Cromwell's burly figure, "No, be very careful not to touch me," Kennaston implored. "The dream must last till I have found out how through your aid, Ettarre, this bull-

necked country squire has come to rule England. It is precisely as I expected. You explain Cromwell, you explain Mohammed,—Richelieu and Tamburlaine and Julius Cæsar, I suspect, and, as I know, Napoleon,—all these men who have inexplicably risen from nothing to earthly supremacy. How is it done, Ettarre?"

"It is not I who contrive it, Horvendile. I am but an incident in such men's lives. They have known me—yes: and knowing me, they were bent enough on their own ends to forget that I seemed not unlovely. It is not the sigil and the power the sigil gives which they love and serve—"

"And that small square mirror, such as Cromwell also carried—?" Kennaston began. "Or is this forbidden talk?"

"Yes, that mirror aids them," Ettarre replied. "In that mirror they can see only themselves. So the mirror aids toward the ends they chose, with open eyes. . . . But you cannot ever penetrate these mysteries now, Horvendile. The secret of the mirror was offered you once, and you would not bargain. The secret of the mirror is offered to no man twice."

And Kennaston laughed merrily. "What does it matter? I am perfectly content. That is more than can be said for yonder sanctimonious fat old rascal, who has just told me he is going into Ireland 'for the propagating of the gospel of Christ, the establishing of truth and peace, and the restoring of that bleeding nation to its former happiness and tranquillity.' Why is it that people of executive ability seem always to be more or less mentally deficient? Now, you and I know that, in point of fact, he is going into Ireland to burn villages, massacre women, hang bishops, and generally qualify his name for all time as a Hibernian synonym for infamy. Oh, no, the purchase-price of grandeur is too great; and men that crown themselves in this world inevitably perform the action with soiled hands. Still, I wish I had known I was going visiting to-night in seventeenth-century England," said Kennaston, reflectively; "then I could have read up a bit. I don't even know whether Virginia ever submitted to him. It simply shows what idleness may lead to! If I had studied history more faithfully I would have been able to-night to prophesy to Oliver Cromwell about the results of his Irish campaigns and so on, and could have impressed him vastly with my abilities. As it is, I have missed an opportunity which will probably not ever occur again to any man of my generation. . . ."

HORVENDILE TO ETTARRE: AT VAUX-LE-VICOMTE

"WHAT fun!" says Kennaston; "we are at Vaux-le-Vicomte, where Fouquet is entertaining young Louis Quatorze. Yonder is La Vallière,—the thin tow-headed girl, with the big mouth. People are just beginning to whisper scandal about her. And that tall jade is Athenaïs de Tonnay-Charente,—the woman who is going to be Madame de Montespan and control everything in the kingdom later on, you remember. The King is not yet aware of her existence, nor has Monsieur de Montespan been introduced. . . .

"The Troupe of Monsieur is about to present an open-air comedy. It is called *Les Facheux,*—The Bores. It is rumored to take off very cleverly the trivial tedious fashion in which perfectly well-meaning people chatter their way through life. But that more fittingly would be the theme of a tragedy, Ettarre. Men are condemned eternally to bore one another. Two hundred years and more from to-day—perhaps forever,—man will lack means, or courage, to voice his actual thoughts adequately. He must still talk of weather probabilities and of having seen So-and-so and of such trifles, that mean to him absolutely nothing,—and must babble of these things even to the persons who are most dear and familiar to him. Yes, every reputable man must desperately make small-talk, and echo and re-echo senseless phrases, until the crack of doom. He will always be afraid to bare his actual thoughts and interests to his fellows' possible disapproval: or perhaps it is just a pitiable mania with the race. At all events, one should not laugh at this ageless aspersion and burlesque of man's intelligence as performed by man himself. . . .

"The comedy is quite new. A marquis, with wonderful canions and a scented wig like an edifice, told me it is by an upholsterer named Coquelin, a barn-stormer who ran away from home and

has been knocking about the provinces unsuccessfully for nearly twenty years: and my little marquis wondered what in the world we are coming to, when Monsieur le Surintendent takes up with that class of people. Is not my little marquis droll?—for he meant Poquelin, soon to be Poquelin de Molière, of course. Molière, also, is a name which is not famous, as yet. But in a month or so it will be famous for all time; and Monsieur le Surintendent will be in jail and forgotten. . . .

"You smile, Ettarre? Ah, yes, I understand. Molière too adores you. All poets have had fitful glimpses of you, Ettarre, and of that perfect beauty which is full of troubling reticences, and so, is touched with something sinister. I have written as to the price they pay, these hapless poets, in a little book I am inditing through that fat pudgy body I wear in the flesh. . . . Do not frown: I know it is forbidden to talk with you concerning my life in the flesh. . . .

"Ah, the King comes,—evidently in no very amiable frame of mind,—and all rise, like a flurry of great butterflies. It is the beginning of the play. See, a woman is coming out of the big shell in the fountain. . . .

"I wish my old friend Jonas d'Artagnan were here. It is a real pity he is only a character in fiction,—just as I once thought you to be, Ettarre. Eh, what a fool I was to imagine I had created you! and that I controlled your speech and doings! I know much better now. . . .

"Ettarre, your unattainable beauty tears my heart. Is that black-browed Molière your lover too? What favors have you granted him? You perceive I am jealous. How can I be otherwise, when there is nothing, nothing in me, that does not cry out for love of you? And I am forbidden ever to win quite to you, ever to touch you, ever to see you even save in my dreams!"

HORVENDILE TO ETTARRE: IN THE CONCIERGERIE

They waited in a big dark room of the Conciergerie, with many other condemned emigrants, until the tumbrils should come to fetch them to the Place de la Révolution. They stood beneath a narrow barred window, set high in the wall, so that thin winter sunlight made the girl's face visible. Misery was about them, death waited without: and it did not matter a pennyworth.

"Ettarre, I know to-day that all my life I have been seeking you. Very long ago when I was a child it was made clear that you awaited me somewhere; and, I recollect now, I used to hunger for your coming with a longing which has not any name. And when I went about the dusty world I still believed you waited somewhere, —till I should find you, as I inevitably must, or soon or late. Did I go upon a journey to some unfamiliar place?—it might be that unwittingly I traveled toward your home. I could never pass a walled garden where green tree-tops showed, without suspecting, even while I shrugged to think how wild was the imagining, that there was only the wall between us. I did not know the color of your eyes, but I knew what I would read there. And for a fevered season I appeared to encounter many women of earth who resembled you—"

"All women resemble me, Horvendile. Whatever flesh they may wear as a garment, and howsoever time-frayed or dull-hued or stained by horrible misuse that garment may seem to be, the wearer of that garment is no less fair than I, could any man see her quite clearly. Horvendile, were that not true, could our great Author find anywhere a woman's body which wickedness and ugliness controlled unchecked, all the big stars which light the universe, and even the tiny sun that our earth spins about, would be blown

out like unneeded candles, for the Author's labor would have been frustrated and misspent."

"Yes; I know now that this is true. . . . See, Ettarre! Yonder woman is furtively coloring her cheeks with a little wet red rag. She does not wish to seem pale—or is it that she wishes to look her best?—in the moment of death. . . . Ettarre, my love for you whom I could not ever find, was not of earth, and I could not transfer it to any of our women. The lively hues, the lovely curvings and the fragrant tender flesh of earth's women were deft to cast their spells; but presently I knew this magic was only of the body. It might be I was honoring divinity; but it was certain that even in such case I was doing so by posturing before my divinity's effigy in tinted clay. Besides, it is not possible to know with any certainty what is going on in the round glossy little heads of women. 'I hide no secrets from you, because I love you,' say they?—eh, and their love may be anything from a mild preference to a flat lie. And so, I came finally to concede that all women are creatures of like frailties and limitations and reserves as myself, and I was most poignantly lonely when I was luckiest in love. Once only, in my life in the flesh, it seemed to me that a woman, whom I had abandoned, held in her hand the sigil visibly. That memory has often troubled me, Ettarre. It may be that this woman could have given me what I sought everywhere in vain. But I did not know this until it was too late, until the chance and the woman's life alike were wasted. . . . And so, I grew apathetic, senseless and without any spurring aspiration, seeing that all human beings are so securely locked in the prison of their flesh."

The girl replied: "When immortals visit earth it is necessary they assume the appearance of some animal. Very long ago, as we have seen, Horvendile, was discovered that secret, which so many myths veil thinly: and have we not learned, too, that the animal's fleshly body is a disguise which it is possible to put aside?"

He said: "That knowledge, so fearfully purchased at the Sabbat, still troubles me, Ettarre. Yes, it is perturbing to be assured I am only a garment which is sometimes worn by that Horvendile who is of the Léshy, and who shifts other puppets than I can imagine. For I am an overweening garment, Ettarre,—or rather, let us say, I flauntingly esteem myself a fine feather in the cap of this eternal

Horvendile. So does it sometimes seem to my vainglorious self-conceit that even this demiurgic Horvendile and his Poictesme, and, for that matter, all the living anywhere in this world, are only the notions of a certain fat and flabby dreamer—"

"Nobody can think that, dear Horvendile, so long as he recalls the Sabbat—"

"Indeed," said Kennaston, in startled haste, "I am not likely to forget the Sabbat. . . . Monsieur le Prince, I regret the circumstance, but—as you see—my snuff-box is quite empty. Ah, but yes, as you very justly observe, rappee, repose and rationality are equally hard to come by in these mad days. . . . Is that not droll, Ettarre? This unvenerable old Prince de Gâtinais—once Grand Duke of Noumaria, you remember,—has in his career been guilty of every iniquity and meanness and cowardice: now, facing instant death, he finds time to think of snuff and phrase-making. . . . But—to go back a little,—I had thought the Sabbat would be so different! One imagined there would be cauldrons, and hags upon prancing broomsticks, and a black Goat, of course—"

"How much more terrible it is," the girl replied,—"and how beautiful!"

"Yet—in despite of that which the Sabbat revealed,—even now I may not touch you, Ettarre."

"My friend, all men have striven to do that; and I have evaded each one of them at the last, and innumerable are the ways of my elusion. There is no man but has loved me, no man that has forgotten me, and none but has attempted to express that which he saw and understood when I was visible."

"Do I not know?" the man said, unhappily. "There is no beauty in the world save those stray hints of you, Ettarre. Canvas and stone and verse speak brokenly of you sometimes; all music yearns toward you, Ettarre, all sunsets whisper of you, and it is because they awaken memories of you that the eyes of all children so obscurely trouble and delight us. Ettarre, your unattainable beauty tears my heart. There is nothing, nothing in me, that does not cry out for love of you. And it is the cream of a vile jest that I am forbidden ever to win quite to you, ever to touch you, ever to see you even save in my dreams!"

"Already this dream draws toward an end, my poor Horvendile."

And he saw that the great doors—which led to death,—were unclosing: and beyond them he saw confusedly a mob of red-capped men, of malignant frenzied women, of wide-eyed little children, and the staid officials, chatting pleasantly among themselves, who came to fetch that day's tale of those condemned to the guillotine. But more vividly Kennaston saw Ettarre, and saw how tenderly she smiled, in thin wintry sunlight, as she touched Kennaston upon the breast, so that the dream might end and he might escape the guillotine.

OF ONE ENIGMA THAT THREATENED TO PROVE ALLEGORICAL

THEN again Kennaston stood alone before a tall window, made up of many lozenge-shaped panes of clear glass set in lead framework. He had put aside one of the two great curtains—of a very fine stuff like gauze, stitched over with transparent glittering beetle-wings, and embroidered with tiny seed pearls,—which hung before this window.

Snow covered the expanse of house-tops without, and the sky without was glorious with chill stars. That white city belonged to him, he knew, with a host of other cities. He was the strongest of kings. People dreaded him, he knew; and he wondered why anyone should esteem a frail weakling such as he to be formidable. The hand of this great king—his own hand, that held aside the curtain before him,—was shriveled and colorless as lamb's wool. It was like a horrible bird-claw.

(*"But then I have the advantage of remembering the twentieth century,"* he thought, fleetingly, *"and all my contemporaries are superstitious ignorant folk. It is strange, but in this dream I appear to be an old man. That never happened before."*)

A remote music resounded in his ears, and cloying perfumes were about him. . . .

"I want to be happy. And that is impossible, because there is no happiness anywhere in the world. I, a great king, say this—I, who am known in unmapped lands, and before whom nations tremble. For there are but three desirable things in life,—love and power and wisdom: and I, the king, have sounded the depths of these, and in none is happiness."

Despairing words came to him now, and welled to his lips, in a sort of chaunt:

"I am sad to-night, for I remember that I once loved a woman.

She was white as the moon; her hair was a gold cloud; she had untroubled eyes. She was so fair that I longed for her until my heart was as the heart of a God. But she sickened and died: worms had their will of her, not I. So I took other women, and my bed was never lonely. Bright poisonous women were brought to me, from beyond the sunset, from the Fortunate Islands, from Invallis and Planasia even; and these showed me nameless endearments and many curious perverse pleasures. But I was not able to forget that woman who was denied me because death had taken her: and I grew a-weary of love, for I perceived that all which has known life must suffer death.

"There was no people anywhere who could withstand my armies. We traveled far in search of such a people. My armies rode into a country of great heat and endless sands, and contended with the Presbyter's brown horsemen, who fought with arrows and brightly painted bows; and we slew them. My armies entered into a land where men make their homes in the shells of huge snails, and feed upon white worms which have black heads; and we slew them. My armies passed into a land where a people that have no language dwell in dark caves under the earth, and worship a stone that has sixty colors; and we slew them, teaching ruthlessly that all which has known life must suffer death.

"Many stiff-necked kings, still clad in purple and scarlet and wearing gold crowns—monarchs whose proud faces, for all that these men were my slaves, kept their old fashion and stayed changeless as the faces of statues,—such were my lackeys: and I burned walled cities. Empires were my playthings, but I had no son to inherit after me. I had no son—only that horrible, blue, smashed and bleeding thing, born dead, that I remember seeing very long ago where the woman I loved lay dead. That would have been my son had the thing lived,—a greater and a nobler king than I. But death willed otherwise: the life that moved in me was not to be perpetuated: and so, the heart in my body grew dried and little and shriveled, like a parched pea: for I perceived that all which has known life must suffer death.

"Then I turned from warfare, and sought for wisdom. I learned all that it is permitted any man to know—oh, I learned more than is permissible. Have I not summoned demons from the depths of

the sea, and at Sabbat have I not smitten haggard Gods upon the cheek? Yea, at Phigalia did I not pass beneath the earth and strive with a terrible Black Woman, who had the head of a horse, and wrest from her what I desired to know? Have I not talked with Morskoï, that evil formless ruler of the Sea-Folk, and made a compact with him? And has not even Phobetor, whose real name may not be spoken, revealed to me his secrets, at a paid price of which I do not care to think, now I perceive that all which has known life must suffer death?

"Yea, by the Hoofs of the Goat! it seems to me that I have done these things; yet how may I be sure? For I have learned, too, that all man's senses lie to him, that nothing we see or hear or touch is truthfully reported, and that the visible world at best stands like an island in an uncharted ocean which is a highway, none the less, for much alien traffic. Yet, it seems to me that I found means whereby the universe I live in was stripped of many veils. It seems to me that I do not regret having done this. . . . But presently I shall be dead, and all my dearly-purchased, wearily-earned wisdom must lie quiet in a big stone box, and all which has known life must suffer death.

"For death is mighty, and against it naught can avail: it is terrible and strong and cruel, and a lover of bitter jests. And presently, whatever I have done or studied or dreamed, I must lie helpless where worms will have their will of me, and neither the worms nor I will think it odd, because we have both learned—by how countless attestings!—that all which has known life must suffer death."

A remote music resounded in his ears, and cloying perfumes were about him. Turning, he saw that the walls of this strange room were of iridescent lacquer, worked with bulls and apes and parrots in raised gold: black curtains screened the doors: and the bare floor was of smooth sea-green onyx.

Moreover a woman stood there who did not speak, but only waited. So did he perceive what terror was, for terror possessed him utterly; and yet he was elated, in the while that he said,—

"You have come, then, at last. . . ."

"To you at last I have come as I come to all men," she answered, "in my good hour." Then Ettarre's hands, gleaming and half-

hidden with jewels, reached toward his hands, so gladly raised to hers; and the universe seemed to fold about him, just as a hand closes.

Was it as death she came to him in this dream?—as death made manifest as man's liberation from much vain toil? Kennaston, at least, preferred to think his dreams were not degenerating into such hackneyed, crude, misleading allegories. . . . Or perhaps it was as the ghost of that dead woman whom the king had loved, and must love forever, that Ettarre had come, to guide him very tenderly out of his kingdom in this world, now that the king was age-stricken and near to death, for in this one dream alone Kennaston had seemed to be an old man.

Kennaston could not ever be sure. The broken dream remained an enigma. But he got sweet terror and happiness of the dream, for all that, tasting his moment of inexplicable, poignant emotion; and therewith he was content.

FROM

Straws and Prayer-Books

FLAWS IN THE SPUR

STRAWS AND PRAYER-BOOKS *explains not only how the works of James Branch Cabell came to be written but also why artists work and play at all at their craft or game, instead of laying bricks or selling motor cars or writing advertisements of bricks or motor cars. "Flaws in the Spur" is (with slight omissions) the tenth and concluding chapter of this concluding volume, and contains the "gist of the epilogue." If to the author's belief that it is "the whole truth about the literary artist" another artist may retort, "Speak for yourself, James," that, he would be the first to admit, is all that he has really done. When any man, artist or not, with fair clarity and vigor of exposition speaks for himself, he tells us a good deal about the rest of us, and that is a main reason, if not why books are written, why they are read.* Straws and Prayer-Books *may not seem to everybody the whole truth and nothing but the truth, yet it seems to at least one editorial commentator a widely inclusive view of the act and motive of artistic creation, a view based upon a long, rich, and meditative literary experience. So that it may be accepted as speaking for the whole spiritual breed of inventive geniuses, and also for men of lesser talent, who tend to their own queer knitting and are sometimes neglected by the world or are inconsonant, irreconcilable with its ways, but who really constitute the most highly privileged economic class and with the product of their knitting warm their fellowmen against the harsh blasts of that very world and its ways. By amusing themselves they amuse other people, and even, sometimes, instruct them. What other excuse for existence does any artist need? What other uses in the world should he be required to serve?*

J. M.

FLAWS IN THE SPUR

§ 88

The literary artist plays, I had said, not merely in such fashions as I had enumerated. He plays, even over and above all this, with the notion that his self-diversions are altruistic and for the large benefit of posterity. This idea is, to the considerate, inexplicable: but nobody need seriously question its potency. "Fame is the spur," as Milton some while since observed, that very often rowels the artist into doing rather objectionably painstaking work.

For custom assumes that time deals very carefully with reading-matter, omnisciently discarding the trash, and preserving to outlast a kingdom or two that which is finest. And probably the notion of this posthumous atonement for the current era's stupidity has heartened, in every era, the creative writer who viewed with a shared seriousness his craft and his income.

One may permissibly wonder, none the less, if time does right all unfailingly, in quite this taken-for-granted fashion. The present generation is the utmost that has thus far been produced in the way of posterity. It seems, at least, remarkable that we who have made the *Saturday Evening Post* a literary success second only to the Telephone Book should be the clear-eyed cognoscenti to whom dead poets appealed; and that it was in our standards of criticism they invested their life's labor and confidence. * * * *

§ 89

Now, not as that all-righting posterity do we approach, of course, the books we actually read. Nobody expects that our judgments of current literature should be perennially brazen when two or three unbend in talk about that merchandise which is sold in the same "department" of the more prominent stores as stationery and string and glue. The rub is, rather, that our chief "classics" appear to have

been selected and handed down to fame by the long arm of coincidence.

That which remains to us of Greek and Roman literature composes, by general consent, our greatest treasure, the treasure which time has most thoroughly tested and approved. And it is precisely here that one finds least cause to suspect time of any entangling alliance with justice. There is no vaguest reason to suppose that of the Greek and Roman writers we have preserved, by any standards, what was best worth keeping; nor that of such authors as Æschylos and Aristophanes of whom oblivion has spared more than the name we have retained the masterworks. We cherish, instead, each scrap that accident has made peerless by the destruction of its rivals. We have but those writings by each of them which Byzantine schoolmasters selected as the most fit to be read aloud, in their classrooms, by the immature: and I fancy that nobody living will esteem this a just way in which to edit any conceivable author.

Nor is that all. I might go on to speak, even more tediously, of Sappho and Petronius and Plutarch, and of Virgil's foiled endeavors to destroy the latter part of his *Æneid,*—and about the dream that revealed the hiding place of Dante's lost cantos, and about John Warburton's cook, and about how the Bible came by its present contents,—to show through what queer accidents the world's chief "classics," the books which are likely always to remain in theory man's finest literary achievements, have been made just what they are. But the point is that they might quite as easily have been something else. The point is that they have not earned their present and probably perpetual rank by their pre-eminence in special qualities, nor by any æsthetic principle whatever. And if the supreme names and masterpieces of the world's literature have been tagged as such by justice,—which always remains just barely possible,—it was done without removing her bandage, in the hazards of a game of blind man's buff.

But I refrain, in charity, from such pedantic considerations. Here is real need, though, to point out that before printing became pandemic the only way in which anybody's writing won a chance of survival was by some other person's finding its matter sufficiently congenial to be at pains to make a copy of it. * * * * That dangerous invention of Gutenberg's has changed all; and has ensured

a fair chance of perpetuity for that which is excellent, provided always this excellence be not swept away unnoted and hidden by the spume and froth of the torrential river it floats in, that ever-passing deluge of the current books. Sometimes befalls a favoring miracle of salvage, and such dissimilar lost argosies as those of Samuel Butler and Herman Melville return upstream with flying colors. But who may say how deep, how irretrievably, their betters may lie sunken? or can gravely assert that literary permanence is in any very general demand among the buyers or the publishers or the writers of new books? . . . Indeed, I know of no class of men which quite whole-heartedly desires the production and formal recognizing of any more "classics": since even those who care for fine literature cannot but obscurely feel that there is already a deal more of it existent than any human being can hope to assimilate; and that already the literary pantheon of the self-respecting is thronged with gods whose virtues we are compelled, in this limited lifetime, to accept as an article of faith. There is, for example, Defoe or Richardson—and of more recent hierarchs, Marcel Proust or Thomas Hardy or Joseph Conrad,—before the shrine of each of whom a many are very zealous to pass with every form of respect which does not entail stopping. And I suspect, if the persons who cry up *Don Quixote* were afforded a choice between silence and reading every line of this world-famous "classic," there would no longer be any need to think for an instant before you decide which pronunciation to give its name.

§ 90

* * * * The quality which makes for acknowledged greatness in a writer is—I know not how many textbooks have assured us,—the universality of his appeal. His ideas are, in brief, the ideas which the majority of persons find acceptable; and Shakespeare has been praised, for once with absolute justice, as "the myriad-minded," because myriads have always had just such a mind as his. The writer of "classics," in short, has need of quite honest and limited thinking, and of an ability to utter platitudes with that wholesome belief in their importance which no hypocrisy nor art can ever mimic. . . . Of the letters of a foreign nation nobody can speak without some danger of magnifying his everyday folly. But it appears safe here to point out that the main treasures of our national literature, in-

cluding its British tributaries, really are, when considered in the light of the ideas they express, rather startlingly silly. The "ideas" of Chaucer and of Shakespeare and of Milton, when once looked at without prejudice, appear to wander sheepishly from the platitudinous to the imbecile, the while that their "stories" rove, in somewhat more the manner of the mountain goat, about the heights of idiocy. And when you compare the reality with the ideas which Scott and Thackeray and Dickens quite gravely expressed about human existence, the incongruity breathes more of pathos than of mirth: for these novelists expressed the usual ideas.

Most persons really do believe, for example, that complete and abiding happiness is to be won by marriage, until they have tried it: and, for that matter, widows have been known to carry this romanticism to the extreme of taking a second husband. Most persons do honestly believe that, in the outcome, wickedness is punished and virtue is rewarded (again) with a complete and abiding happiness: and in consequence of this belief most persons make it a point in social intercourse to check their natural, not infrequent impulses toward rape or murder. Most persons do, in fact, for various reasons, think it best to be "good"; and do expect, for equally various reasons, to be happy by and by. Now, with hardly an exception, the concededly "classic" writers have, without any detectable scepticism, set forth such popular notions, with every fit adornment of rhetoric and of cunning diction: and their ideas have endured for the plain reason that they were endurable.

§ 91

* * * * Nor do many of the auctorially great escape calumny in the form of a Complete Edition, wherein their self-confessed failures at writing, and the chips and rubbish of the workshop, and the rough draughts and notes designed for the waste-basket, and the politic ephemeræ into which most writers are allured by kindness or advertising purposes, are piddlingly amassed to be bound up, in pompous scavengery, with all the unsigned refuse from the back files of magazines which can now safely be "attributed" to the forever silenced victim. None other of the dead has even his appointed executors combined to convict him of idiocy. We have in our own time seen the neat talents of a Robert Louis Stevenson thus over-

greedily buried by his heirs in the impenetrable jungle of his complete collected works. . . . And of course those less put-upon immortals who are recollected, howsoever infrequently, by virtue of one book alone are but too apt to get into some such collection as Everyman's Library, and have the upshot of their existence identified with the twaddle and smug tediums of Anthony Trollope and Jane Austen and Mary Cowden Clarke.

And the writer who is raised to the peerage of the remembered dead is likewise granted an estate, commensurate with his dignity, in the fields of human aversion. Luckless typesetters have to read every word of his books; in your library he usurps grudged shelf-room, in the bright armor of a binding too handsome to be relegated to the dustheap of any married man; the oppressed young have his loathed archaisms included in their "parallel reading" at school, where also they are sometimes put to the *peine dure et forte* of "parsing" him; in women's clubs he incurs the stigma of being quoted with approval from the platform, by persons in the bankruptcy of mind appropriate to that deadly eminence; and dear old bishops likewise quote him in their sermons, utilizing his dreams as hypnotics. . . . He becomes, in fine, a nuisance, and is thought of with mingled condescension and haziness and dislike. And it appears, to the considerate, a prodigality of currishness, thus in so many ways to "beat the bones of the buried" because their outcast owner once voiced memorably the common beliefs and hopes,—the tonic fallacies, the sustaining delusions,—which keep a vigorous heart in the ribs, and marrow in the bones, of all that are not buried, not yet.

Here is no need to assume, however, that every classic author has from the beginning been commonplace in absolutely everything. It may happen, indeed, that a writer putting forth an unpopularly rational thought may have his heresy so generally assailed, and so often controverted, as to make it sufficiently hackneyed for wide acceptance: but mediocrity, even in "daringness" and "unconventionality," thrives from the first; and is the firmlier assured of posterity's respectful reprinting. And the display of uncommon mentality is, as a rule, as fatal to the literary life of a book as it is to the physical life of man.

§ 92

For there really does seem to be over all a force—to be labelled what you will,—that is hostile to the undue development, in any direction, of man's mind. Here death is not directly involved: rather, does it appear to be life which is resolute to use men within inflexible limits. . . . And so I now incline to dismiss those earlier notions as to nothing being apparent anywhere except the operation and the products of death. I begin to play with the fancy that life is indeed aiming at something quite definite; and that the wise man's part therein is to be patient, to cling to mediocrity, and to get bread and children, and presently to die, with no more of active discomfort than may prove unavoidable.

It well may be, I reflect, that all is not at loose ends; and that some scheme of happenings is foreordained; and that we serve in it, somehow, when we live tranquilly and propagate; since, certainly, the desire to do just these two things is the one human desire encountered everywhere.

And perhaps—I yet further speculate,—perhaps the phenomena called "literary genius" and "artistic ability" are vexatious little mishaps, a trifle gone wrong, in the broad working out of a plan which they minutely hamper. . . . So the contretemps is remedied. The person afflicted with "genius" is removed, be it by his other diseases or by his fellows' natural dislike of him, it hardly matters: either way, there is by ordinary in his removal a smack of haste: and you will note that, whether in polity or in mercy, it is somehow provided that his children do not inherit his affliction. . . . So does life seem to keep her pawns from errancy. So does she seem to restrict them, with now and then some show of pettishness, to the arena and the service of her large and dim and patient gaming: and wisdom bids us emulate this patience, in the while that we get bread and children, and trust to die with no more of active discomfort than may prove unavoidable.

And yet, even so, in the bared teeth of outraged reason, no one of us rests quite content to be a mere transmitter of semen, and to serve as one of many millions of instruments in life's inexplicable labor, used for a little time as such, and then put by, worn out and finished with forever. We appeal against oblivion. And not only

does the shatter-pated artist appeal: the Pharaohs have filed pyramidic caveats, the best-thought-of business-men yet enter demurrers in the form of public libraries: there is no tombstone howsoever modest but insanely appeals to posterity to keep in mind somebody's dates of birth and death and middle name.

For we will to continue here, in the world known to us, to continue, if only as syllables. We all will not to be forgotten utterly by those that must so soon inherit our familiar dear estate of tedium and of muddle-headedness and of fret and of failure; and that in our places will get bread and children; and that, after our going, will very soon, in our relinquished beds, be striving to die with no more of active discomfort than may prove unavoidable.

Yet here is an odd thing. We can pretend to offer no example worth the following, not even any salutary instance of just what to avoid; and in no paradise nor in any limbo for the dead which has been divinely revealed to human beings, thus far, may we derive from being so remembered one minim of profit. We are spurred by neither altruism nor self-seeking; the counsellor that persuades to the appeal remains anonymous: and it seems that, here again, some power which mocks at reason, or at least at human reason, is moving us to serve unknown but, one suspects, not unappointed ends.

For we do not know, either here or elsewhere, what ends may be appointed. But we do know, I think, that every wise man will avoid too much of guesswork, in the brief while that he gets bread and children, and patiently foreplans to die with no more of active discomfort than may prove unavoidable.

§ 93

Thus, then, I reflected, now that I approached my summing up, the writer who is sustained by the notion of his books' being perpetual things cannot, after two minutes of honest thought, believe himself to be sustained also by altruism, nor by any faith in the superior discernment of posterity. Upon no ground perceptible to me could reason detect, the instant that reason weighed the present rate and direction of man's progress, any marked likelihood of posterity's being in anything more logical than is that contemporaneous, so huge and so depressingly unimpressed audience which every

artist must perforce contemn. Posterity in its approach to literary matters would probably muddle forward, as man has always done, upon humanity's time-tested crutches of hearsay and stupidity. The men who after our departure inherited the gray tedium of man's daily living would keep some of our books (but not really read them), and others of our books they would destroy, not in any haphazard fashion, but acting always under the adamantean human compulsion to be illogical about everything.

Not any art or painstaking, nor certainly any accident of "genius," could enable a book to live. Chance alone appeared to do that, and then only in a very limited sense. And in this final, frantic, and yet optimistic appeal to posterity—here, too, man clung to his great racial custom of being illogical about everything; and every serious author triumphantly attested himself to be, after all, quite human. That seemed the conclusion of the matter. . . .

So I ran over my enlinked deductions. Man lived, for a major part of his conceded time, a meagre and monotonous and unsatisfying existence: this he alleviated by endlessly concocting fictions which bedrugged and diverted him. The artist, and in particular the literary artist, like every other person animate, attempted to bedrug and to divert primarily himself; which end the literary artist gained, as a rule, by picturing himself as figuring enviably in unfamiliar surroundings, and as making sport with the three martinets that he, in common with all men at bottom, most genuinely abhorred,—that is, with common-sense and with piety and with death. Moreover, he diverted himself by playing with such human ideas as he found entertaining: and he played too with the notion of hoodwinking posterity into accepting, and into treasuring, his highly imaginative portrait of himself. And the outcome of his multifold playing—of that interminable self-diversion which he, quite unsmilingly, called his "work,"—was always unpredictable, always chance-guided, and, in any case, was of no benefit or hurt to him by and by, and was not ever of grave importance to anybody else. . . . That seemed to be the whole truth about the literary artist. That seemed the gist of the epilogue which I had now evolved for the Biography of Dom Manuel's life, and which I was submitting to myself tonight as the explanation of why I had given over so many years, along with digestion and eyesight, to the writing of the Biography.

Yes, all my premises seemed true: my deductions appeared to hold together. My logic and its upshot, in any event, contented me. What, I had begun by asking, does the author get out of it all? Well, I had found that unknown quantity; the equation now was solved; and *x* amounted to, exactly, nothing. That was the mathematics of it: only, as you may recall, it had been revealed to me, through the aid of my small son, that mathematics too amounted to, exactly, nothing. And, besides, here also, in reaching this negation, I had most gratifyingly attained, in the same moment that I discredited, the aim of every valid author. For I had found, I reflected, even here, precisely as Gerald Musgrave had found in the Marches of Antan, some rather delightful ideas to play with. . . . * * * *

EXPLICIT